Byzantine Military Organization on the Danube, 10th-12th Centuries

Alexandru Madgearu

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EAST CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE IN THE MIDDLE AGES, 450-1450

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Florin Curta

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAnt	Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, Budapest
AB	Archaeologia Bulgarica, Sofia
AEMA	Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi, Wiesbaden
AIIAI	Anuarul Institutului de Istorie şi Arheologie "A. D. Xenopol", Iaşi
AM	Arheologia Moldovei, Iaşi
AMN	Acta Musei Napocensis, Cluj-Napoca
AMV	Acta Musei Varnensis, Varna
Arh	Arheologija, Sofia
B	Byzantion. Revue internationale des études byzantines, Bruxelles
BB	Byzantinobulgarica, Sofia
BBA	Berliner Byzantinische Arbeiten, Berlin
BF	Byzantinische Forschungen, Amsterdam
BHR	Bulgarian Historical Review, Sofia
BM	*Bulgaria mediaevalis*, ed. V. Gjuzelev, V. Tăpkova-Zaimova, K. Nenov, Sofia
BMI	Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice, Bucureşti
BMGS	Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, Birmingham
BNJ	Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher, Athens
BS	Byzantine Studies, Pittsburgh
BSH	Bulletin de la Section Historique de l'Académie Roumaine, Bucarest
BSNR	Buletinul Societăţii Numismatice Române, Bucureşti
Borders	*Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis. Frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Centre for Medieval Studies. University of York. Studies in the Early Middle Ages, 12), edited by Florin Curta, Turnhout, 2005
Byzantium and East Central Europe	*Byzantium and East Central Europe. Papers of a Symposium, Cracow, 24–26 September 2000*, edited by G. Prinzing, M. Salamon, P. Stephenson, Cracow, 2001
Byzantium at War	*Byzantium at War* (*9th–12th c.*). National Hellenic Research Foundation, Institute of Byzantine Research (International Symposium, 4), edited by K. Tsiknakis, Athens, 1997

Byzanz und Nachbarn	*Byzanz und seine Nachbarn*, hrsg. von A. Hohlweg (Südost-Europa Jahrbuch, 26), München, 1996
Byzsl	Byzantinoslavica, Prague
BZ	Byzantinische Zeitschrift, München
CCDJ	Cultură şi civilizaţie la Dunărea de Jos, Călăraşi
CFHB	*Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*
CIEB XII	*Actes du XII^e Congrès International d'Études Byzantines* (*Ochride, 10–16 septembre 1961*), 2 vol., Belgrade, 1964
CIEB XIV	*Actes du XIV^e Congrès International des Études Byzantines*, 3 vol., Bucurarest, 1974–1976
CIEB XV	*Actes du XV^e Congrès International d'Études Byzantines* (Athènes, Septembre 1976), Athènes, 1980
CIEB XX	*XX^e Congrès International des Études Byzantines. Pré-actes*, 3 vol., Paris, 2001
CN	Cercetări numismatice, Bucureşti
Cronica 1999	*Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 1999*, Deva, 2000
Cronica 2000	*Cronica cercetărilor arheologice. Campania 2000*, Suceava, 2001
Cronica 2001	*Cronica cercetărilor arheologice. Campania 2001*, Buziaş, 2002
Cronica 2002	*Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2002*, Sf. Gheorghe, 2003
Cronica 2003	*Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2003*, Cluj-Napoca, 2004
Cronica 2004	*Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2004*, Mangalia, 2005
Cronica 2005	*Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2005*, Constanţa, 2006
Cronica 2006	*Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2006*, Tulcea, 2007
Cronica 2007	*Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2007*, Iaşi, 2008
Cronica 2008	*Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2008*, Târgovişte, 2009
Cronica 2009	*Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2009*, Suceava, 2010
Cronica 2010	*Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2010*, Sibiu, 2011

Cronica 2011	*Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2011*, Târgu Mureş, 2012
DAW	Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, Denkschriften
Dobrudža	Dobrudža, Varna
Dobrudža. Études	*Dobrudža. Études ethno-culturelles*, Sofia, 1987
DOP	Dumbarton Oaks Papers, Washington DC
EAIVR	*Enciclopedia arheologiei şi istoriei vechi a României*, 3 vol., Bucureşti, 1994–2000
EB	Études Balkaniques, Sofia
EBP	*Études byzantines et post-byzantines*, Bucureşti, Iaşi
ECEEMA	East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450, General Editor F. Curta
Il Mar Nero	Il Mar Nero. Annali di archeologia e storia, Roma-Paris
INMV	Izvestija na Narodnija Muzej (previously Izvestija na Varnenskoto Arheologičesko Družestvo), Varna
Istro-Pontica	*Istro-Pontica. Muzeul tulcean la a 50-a aniversare, 1950–2000. Omagiu lui Simion Gavrilă la 45 de ani de activitate, 1955–2000*, Tulcea, 2000
JÖB	Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik, Wien
MCA	Materiale şi cercetări arheologice, Bucureşti
MGH	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*
MN	Muzeul Naţional, Bucureşti
Peace and War	*Peace and War in Byzantium. Essays in Honor of George T. Dennis S.J.*, edited by Timothy S. Miller and John Nesbitt, Washington DC, 1995
Polychronion	*Polychronion. Festschrift Franz Dölger zum 75. Geburstag*, hrsg. von P. Wirth, Heidelberg, 1966
PP	Pliska-Preslav, Šumen
Prinos	*Prinos lui Petre Diaconu la 80 de ani*. Volum îngrijit de Ionel Cândea, Valeriu Sârbu, Marian Neagu, Brăila, 2004
Proceedings Haralanov	*Proceedings of the International Symposium dedicated to the Centennial of the Dr. Vassil Haralanov, held in Shumen in September the 13th–15th 2007*, coord. Ivan Jordanov, Shumen, 2008
RdI	Revista de istorie, Bucureşti
REB	Revue des Études Byzantines, Paris

RESEE	Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes, Bucarest
RHSEE	Revue Historique du Sud-Est Européen, Bucarest
RI	Revista Istorică, Bucureşti
RIR	Revista Istorică Română, Bucureşti
RRH	Revue Roumaine d'Histoire, Bucarest
SB	Studia Balcanica, Sofia
SBS	Studies in Byzantine Sigillography, Washington DC
SCIV(A)	Studii şi cercetări de istorie veche (şi arheologie), Bucureşti
SCN	Studii şi cercetări de numismatică, Bucureşti
SEER	The Slavonic and East European Review, London
SMIM	Studii şi materiale de istorie medie, Bucureşti
SMMIM	Studii şi materiale de muzeografie şi istorie militară, Bucureşti
SOF	Südost-Forschungen, München
SRH	*Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum tempore ducum regumque stirpis Arpadianae gestarum*. Edendo operi praefuit Emericus Szentpétery, 2 vol., Budapest, 1937–1938
Studii	Studii. Revistă de istorie, Bucureşti
TM	Travaux et Mémoires, Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation Byzantines, Paris
Vyzantina	Vyzantina. Epistemonikon organon Kentrou Vyzantinon Ereunon Philosophikes Scholes Aristoteleiou Panepistemiou, Thessaloniki
Von der Scythia	*Von der Scythia zur Dobrudža*, herausgegeben von Ch. Choliolčev, R. Pillinger, R. Harreither (Miscellanea Bulgarica, 11), Wien, 1997
ZRVI	Zbornik Radova Vizantoloshkog Instituta, Belgrade

INTRODUCTION

The first monograph offering a comprehensive survey of the Byzantine military organization in Bulgaria and Dobrudja was written by Nicolae Bănescu in 1946,[1] as final result of his studies published between 1922 and 1945 (for instance: Bănescu 1922; *Un duc byzantin du XI^e siècle: Katakalon Kékauménos*, BSH, 11, 1924, 25–36; Bănescu 1927; *La question de Paristrion, ou conclusion d'un long débat*, B, 8, 1933, 277–308; *Bizanţul şi romanitatea de la Dunărea de Jos*, Bucureşti, 1938). Besides literary sources (almost the same as those available and known today), his work was based on a small number of lead seals, and on very scarce archaeological data from the fortifications in Capidava and Garvăn, where excavations had started few years before his book was published (see G. Florescu, *Fouilles et recherches archéologiques à Calachioi* (*Capidava?*) *en 1924 et 1926*, Dacia, 3–4, 1927–1932, 483–515; Idem, *Capidava în epoca migraţiilor*, RIR, 16, 1946, 325–343; Gh. Ştefan, *Dinogetia, I. Risultati della prima campagna di scavi*, Dacia, 7–8, 1937–1940 (1941), 401–425).

The book published in 1946 was the first one exclusively dedicated to the military and administrative organization of the provinces Paradunavon and Bulgaria. Before Bănescu, Nicolae Iorga,[2] Gheorghe I. Brătianu,[3] Dragutin Anastasijević,[4] Petăr Mutafčiev,[5] Constantin Necşulescu[6] have dealt with this topic only tangentially. The first seals of military and civilian dignitaries were published in the 1930s. Many came from Silistra, a city within the borders of Romania at that time (see N. Bănescu, *Les sceaux byzantins trouvés à Silistrie*, B, 7, 1932, 1, 321–331; N. Bănescu, P. Papahagi, *Plombs byzantins découverts à Silistrie*, B, 10, 1935, 2, 601–606). Gheorghe I. Brătianu's outstanding monograph dedicated to the Black Sea also contributed to the study of the Byzantine period in the Danubian region. However, although written between 1946 and 1947, the book was published only in 1969, as the author was sent to prison by the Communist

[1] Bănescu 1946.
[2] Iorga 1920, 33–46.
[3] Brătianu 1935, 9–96; Brătianu 1942.
[4] Anastasijević 1930, 20–36.
[5] Mutafčiev 1932.
[6] Necşulescu 1937, 122–151; Necşulescu 1939, 185–206.

regime, and the manuscript was taken to France by Vitalien Laurent, and published there a cultural association of the Romanian diaspora).[7]

The development of the archaeological researches in Romania and Bulgaria after 1948 led to the identification of other Byzantine fortifications, in addition to those sites on which excavations continued: Capidava, Garvăn, Isaccea, Păcuiul lui Soare (in the Romanian part of Dobrudja),[8] Pliska, Preslav, Silistra and Varna (in Bulgaria). The next work building upon of N. Bănescu's was Ion Barnea's contribution to the third volume of the series "Din istoria Dobrogei", published in 1971.[9] Barnea studied military organization on the basis of archaeological finds and of the then most recently discovered seals. He also analyzed the list of offices published by Nicolas Oikonomides in 1965. The monograph included the results of archaeological excavations carried out by I. Barnea himself together with Gheorghe Ştefan and Bucur Mitrea at Garvăn and Isaccea, and also took into account the research of the younger generation of archaeologists (Petre Diaconu and Radu Florescu) at Păcuiul lui Soare and Capidava. The archaeological monograph of Dinogetia-Garvăn published in 1967 brought a decisive contribution to drawing a clear chronology of the period.[10] A brief synthesis of the then current research on the Byzantine frontier in the 10th–12th centuries was presented at the 13th International Congress of Byzantine Studies (London, 1966).[11] Several studies appeared in the 1960s on the military history and historical geography of the Danubian region in the Byzantine period, by such scholars as Alexandru Bolşacov-Ghimpu,[12] Constantin Cihodaru,[13] Petre Diaconu,[14] Alexander Kuzev,[15] Petre Ş. Năsturel,[16] Eugen Stănescu,[17] Andrew Urbansky,[18] Tadeusz Wasilewski.[19]

On the occasion of the 14th International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Bucharest (1971), a remarkable catalogue was published under the

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7 Brătianu 1999.
8 The excavation reports were published each year in SCIV, and then in MCA.
9 Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 71–335.
10 Ştefan, Barnea 1967.
11 Condurachi, Barnea, Diaconu 1967.
12 Bolşacov-Ghimpu 1967; Bolşacov-Ghimpu 1973.
13 Cihodaru 1963; Cihodaru 1965; Cihodaru 1968.
14 Diaconu 1962; Diaconu 1965 a; Diaconu 1965 b; Diaconu 1966.
15 Kuzev 1966, 23–50; Kuzev 1967, 41–70; Kuzev 1968, 27–55; Kuzev 1969, 137–157.
16 Năsturel 1965; Năsturel 1966, 382–387; Năsturel 1969.
17 Stănescu 1966; Stănescu 1968 a; Stănescu 1968 b; Stănescu 1968 c; Stănescu 1970; Stănescu 1971.
18 Urbansky 1968.
19 Wasilewski 1964.

title "Cultura bizantină în România" [Byzantine Culture in Romania], and together with it a number of papers presented at the congress, which were dedicated to the history of the Byzantine military organization of the Danube region.[20] Petre Diaconu's monograph on the Pechenegs, which had been published the previous year, also included some discussion of the military organization of Paradunavon.[21] He continued his studies in the same vein with his book on the Cumans.[22]

A new generation of historians approached the topic in the 1970s, using either literary (Ivan Božilov,[23] Jonathan Shepard,[24] Nicolae Şerban Tanaşoca,[25] Vasilka Tăpkova-Zaimova),[26] or archaeological sources, particularly the ever-growing data resulting from excavations in Păcuiul lui Soare, Capidava, Garvăn, Isaccea, as well as from newly opened sites in Nufăru, Turcoaia, Tulcea, Krivina, Odărci, Vetren, Braničevo (Stefka Angelova, Silvia Baraschi, Victor H. Baumann, Ljudmila Dončeva-Petkova, Gheorghe Mănucu-Adameşteanu, Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu, Marko Popović, Ioan Vasiliu). In Serbia, the building of the power plants in the Iron Gates region offered the opportunity for many rescue excavations, which brought out some results relevant to the history of the 10th–12th centuries. A small sector of the Danube frontier was thus studied in an almost exhaustive manner, although only on the southern bank of the river (no similar research was carried out on the northern, Romanian bank). Finally, excavations in Sirmium (Sremska Mitrovica), Belgrade and Braničevo concerned also the Byzantine fortifications in the area.[27]

A significant progress came with the discovery of many lead seals concerning the military organization, which were later published by Georgi Atanasov, Ion Barnea, Ivan Jordanov, Ljubomir Maksimović, Gheorghe Mănucu-Adameşteanu, Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu, and Werner Seibt. However, by far the most important discovery was that of an entire archive of hundreds of seals in Preslav, the result of Ivan Jordanov's intensive work on that site. This was a material of unique value not just for the region, but for the Byzantine Empire as a whole, since nowhere else had

[20] Stănescu 1974; Lewis 1975; Wasilewski 1975; Barnea 1975 b, 503–508; Tăpkova-Zaimova 1975 b, 615–619.
[21] Diaconu 1970.
[22] Diaconu 1978.
[23] Božilov 1973 b, 111–122; Božilov 1976.
[24] Shepard 1975; Shepard 1979.
[25] Tanaşoca 1973.
[26] Tăpkova-Zaimova 1973.
[27] For all these sites, see the works quoted in chapter III.

so many seals been found in a precisely dated context. The numismatic researches of Gabriel Custurea, I. Jordanov, Gh. Mănucu-Adameşteanu and E. Oberländer-Târnoveanu were also important contribution to the refinement of the chronology of the Danube frontier.

After 1990 new archaeological excavations were carried out in Piatra Frecăţei, Hârşova, Preslav, Pliska, Skala, Rujno, and field work continued at Păcuiul lui Soare, Capidava, Garvăn, Nufăru, and Isaccea. Those excavations were conducted by G. Atanasov, Alexandru Barnea, V. H. Baumann, Costel Chiriac, Oana Damian, I. Jordanov, Gh. Mănucu-Adameşteanu, Ioan C. Opriş, Dorel Paraschiv, and Valeri Yotov.

The rapidly growing amount of information and the general development of studies on Byzantine military history made possible a number of synthetic studies, which clarified various aspects of the military organization of the Danube provinces, or of the frontier history. The studies published by I. Barnea,[28] P. Diaconu,[29] I. Jordanov,[30] Gh. Mănucu-Adameşteanu,[31] N. Oikonomides[32] and T. Wasilewski,[33] brought important contributions to the chronology of the Byzantine military and administrative organization, as well as of the Pecheneg and Cuman invasions. Moreover, the studies of the Hungarian medievalist Ferenc Makk concerning the Byzantine-Hungarian relations during the 11th and 12th centuries dealt also with the Danube frontier, as the military confrontations between Byzantium and Hungary involved the middle course of the river.[34] Other significant contributions to the study of the Danube region may be found in studies of the general military history of the Byzantine Empire published by John Haldon,[35] Hans-Joachim Kühn,[36] Jonathan Shepard[37] and Warren Treadgold.[38] The British Byzantinist Paul Stephenson wrote several studies, later incorporated into a monograph about the Balkan provinces of the Byzantine Empire in the 10th–12th centuries, with many innovative ideas on the evolution of the Danube frontier.[39] Ion Bica's book on the

[28] Barnea 1993 b; Barnea 1997; Barnea 2001.
[29] Diaconu 1986; Diaconu 1987 b; Diaconu 1988 b.
[30] Jordanov 1987 a; Jordanov 1993; Jordanov 1995; Jordanov 2003 b; Jordanov 2011 a.
[31] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1998; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a.
[32] Oikonomides 1998.
[33] Wasilewski 1995.
[34] Makk 1989; Makk 1990; Makk 1994.
[35] Haldon 1999.
[36] Kühn 1991.
[37] Shepard 1999.
[38] Treadgold 1995.
[39] Stephenson 2000; Stephenson 2003.

province Paradunavon is hardly accessible, as it was published only in a small number of copies.[40] Florin Curta's chapters on the Byzantine Danube provinces and the nomad warriors in the history of early medieval South-Eastern Europe should also be mentioned for giving more attention to the archaeological and numismatic data than Stephenson's book.[41]

The recent acceleration over the last few decades of the development of Byzantine Studies, especially in the fields of archaeology and sigillography had a major contribution to a better understanding of the military organization in the Danube region in the 10th–12th centuries. A new synthesis is now possible and necessary.[42] The present book, an updated version of the original manuscript published in Romanian in 2007 by "Cetatea de Scaun" publishing house, is the final result of several of studies dedicated to the beginnings of the Danube provinces, the evolution of the military organization, and different chronological aspects concerning this topic.[43] Some of my initial opinions have changed after learning about the discovery of new seals or the refinement of the analysis of the existing data. The research for this book owes much to the Fulbright post-doctoral grant I received from Ohio State University (October 2002–March 2003), and to further studies in the libraries of Rome and the Dumbarton Oaks Center of Byzantine Studies in Washington DC, as well as in Bulgaria. Many thanks are due to those who have provided me with books and studies which were instrumental for the writing of this work: Viorel Achim, Georgi Atanasov, Jean-Claude Cheynet, Florin Curta, Gabriel Custurea, Anton Cuşa, the late Petre Diaconu, Stela Doncheva, Sergiu Iosipescu, Ivan Jordanov, Gheorghe Mănucu-Adameşteanu, Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu, Paul Stephenson, Victor Spinei, and Valery Yotov.

[40] Bica 2003.
[41] Curta 2006, 180–365.
[42] An overview of the recent research in Tăpkova-Zaimova, Stoimenov 2004, 341–348.
[43] Madgearu 1998; Madgearu 1999 a; Madgearu 1999 b; Madgearu 1999–2000; Madgearu 2003 a; Madgearu 2003 b; Madgearu 2005.

CHAPTER ONE

THE RECOVERY OF THE DANUBIAN FRONTIER

After the Avar and Slavic attacks[1] that caused the abandonment of the Danubian frontier in the first decades of the 7th century, and after the establishment of Bulgaria in 680, the Byzantine navy continued to exert in the intervening period some degree of control over the river, engaging in operations against Bulgaria. On the Danubian sector close to the sea, it is possible that Noviodunum (Isaccea) possibly remained a harbor for the Byzantine ships throughout the entire 7th century,[2] and a stopping point on the way to Durostorum (today Silistra), as did Carsium (Hârşova) for a shorter period.[3] The city of Durostorum was involved in the war of September 680 against the Bulgar ruler Asparukh who occupied the so-called *Onglos*, as a lead seal issued by Constantine IV between 679 and 680 is showing (the seal belonged to a message sent to a high Byzantine dignitary, most probably military, from Durostorum).[4] Closer to the mouths of the Danube, at Nufăru, the lead seal of a dignitary named Kyriakos (dated to 696–697) is a valuable proof that the small fortification that existed there in the 4th–7th centuries was still under Byzantine domination some years after the arrival of the Bulgars.[5] Unfortunately, no extensive excavations were possible within the modern village, although the site appears to have grown in importance after the 10th century.

Not too far from Nufăru and Isaccea, the earthworks enclosing an area near the village of Niculiţel are still a conundrum. Their identification with *Onglos* is not suitable, because it is quite clear from the accounts of both Theophanes Confessor and Nikephoros that that well defended place, surrounded by rivers and marshes, was located north, not south

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[1] Dimitrov 1997, 26–34; Madgearu 1997, 315–324; Curta 2006, 66–69; Madgearu 2007, 265–266.

[2] There are many 7th century seals (Barnea 1997, 354), but very few coins issued after Phokas (Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1996, 104; Iacob 2000, 493).

[3] For coin circulation at Durostorum: Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1996, 103–106. For Carsium, a coin from 629–630 attests the preservation of the contacts with the empire (Custurea 1986, 277, nr. 6). Haldon 1999, 74 admitted that some Danubian fortresses survived in the 7th century because they were supplied by the fleet.

[4] Barnea 1981, 625–628; Jordanov 2009, 82–83, nr 51.

[5] Barnea 2001, 107–108, nr. 5.

of the Danube. Moreover, both authors write of *Onglos* as a place, not a region (Theophanes even said that the *Onglos* was appropriate to accommodate the small number of people that remained after the wars).[6] The "steep rocks" mentioned by Nikephoros seem to be his own invention, because Theophanes, who was better informed, did not record them.[7] Nikephoros may have had in mind the legendary Riphaei Mountains. Some unidentified "fortifications" (οχύρομα) were included in the *Onglos*. Between *Onglos* and the Danube was a small marshy zone. The rivers that bordered the *Onglos* are not named, but they cannot be either the Dnieper or the Dniester, because the Bulgars are said to have crossed them before settling in *Onglos*. The name *Onglos* comes from the Türkic word *agul* / *aul*, which means "court", "enclosure".[8] Many historians identified the *Onglos* with the entire southern part of Moldavia, bordered by the rivers Siret or Prut, and the Dniester, as well as by the Vadul lui Isac-Tatarbunar earthen dike,[9] but the best identification points to a small area between the mouths of the rivers Siret and Prut, confined by the earthen dike built there in the early 2nd century between modern villages of Şerbeşti and Tuluceşti, whose purpose was to provide an extra-defense for the Roman camp at Barboşi.[10]

The theory presented above was rejected by Rašo Rašev, who believed that before 680 Asparukh had conquered a large region bordered by the dike in southern Bessarabia, the Șerbeşti-Tuluceşti dike, and the so-called Small Earthen Dike in Dobrudja. The center of this region, the first Bulgar state, was the ringwork at Niculiţel—the actual *Onglos*.[11] It is true that, according to the Bulgarian *Vision of Prophet Isaiah* written in the second half of the 12th century, *Ispor* (Asparukh) had built a great fortification or dike from the Danube to the sea,[12] but this particular text cannot be

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[6] Theophanes, AM 6171 (transl. Mango, Scott, 498–499); Nikephoros, 35, 36 (ed. Mango, 88–91). The story is repeated by Zonaras, XIV, 21.10–20 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 227).

[7] Hălcescu 1989, 341.

[8] Fehér 1931, 24; Božilov 1975, 31. The etymology from the Latin *angulus*, supported by some historians, is wrong, because Nikephoros specifically mentions that *Onglos* was called so in the language of the Bulgars.

[9] Among them: Fehér 1931, 9–12; Bănescu 1948, 6; Gjuzelev 1984, 35–36; Hălcescu 1989, 339–351; Curta 2006, 79; Sophoulis 2011, 109.

[10] Božilov 1975, 33–36; Toynbee 1973, 440, 452; Sophoulis 2011, 109. For the Roman origin of these walls see Napoli 1997, 359–361.

[11] Rašev 1982, 76–79; Rašev 1987, 49–51; Rašev 1997, 49–54; Rašev 2004, 277–282. This is a developed form of the theory first advanced by Škorpil 1918, 145–152, according to whom Onglos referred to the earthworks as Niculițel.

[12] Fehér 1931, 16; Gjuzelev 1984, 33–34; Squatriti 2005, 59–60, 63, 70; Petkov 2008, 195. For the value of this text, see Dimitrov 1993, 97–109 (only the data about the 11th century are somehow reliable, see Stanev 2012, 21–25).

trusted at all in matters pertaining to the early history of Bulgaria, except in what concerns the memory of its half-legendary characters preserved at the beginning of the second millennium. Regarding Asparukh as their founding hero, medieval Bulgarians attributed to him such impressive earthworks, much like Emperor Trajan was credited with the building of other earthen dike, few of which have actually been built under his reign. It is therefore a gross mistake to take this text at face value in support of archaeological interpretations concerning the 7th century Bulgars.

The Small Earthen Dike between Cochirleni and Constanţa is 61 km long, with a ditch to the south. There are no associated forts. Many hypotheses have been advanced concerning the date of that rampart, which is the oldest of all three dikes running across the central part of Dobrudja (the Small Dike is overlapped by the other two—the Great and the Stone Dike—near Constanţa). Because the Great Earthen Dike seems to be a Late Roman construction (see below), the Small Dike must therefore be of pre-Roman origin. Its dating to the 7th century has been advanced by those who believed the Great Earthen Dike to be a 9th-century building.[13] There is in fact no clear explanation for when and why the Small Dike was built in the first place. Most recently, Pavel Georgiev advanced the idea that the Small and the Great dikes were built at the same time, with the Small one operating as a subsidiary line of defense behind the Great Dike.[14] If so, it remains why there are no forts associated with it. As for dike in southern Bessarabia, between the village of Vadul lui Isac and Tatarbunar, which has its ditch to the north, its dating to the 7th century is based on a number of refuse pits and huts associated with 6th–7th century handmade pottery, which were found on the southern side of the rampart at Kubei (Bolgrad district).[15] Nonetheless, it's the Roman origin of the dike is clear, since 4th century coins were found in the filling of the ditch.[16] Therefore, both earthen dikes believed by Rašev to have been the northern limit of *Onglos* are of Roman origin. Rašev's ideas have been accepted and reproduced by D. I. Dimitrov and Uwe Fiedler.[17]

The earthworks in Niculiţel consist of a circular rampart, 27 km long, which encloses an area of 48.3 km^2; four earthen forts; and two median

[13] Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 97–98, 110, 116–117; Diaconu 1972 a, 377–378; Papuc 1992, 327; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 77; Bogdan-Cătăniciu 2006, 411 (for the pre-Roman origin); Sophoulis 2011, 101.

[14] Georgiev 2010, 413–422.

[15] Curta 2006, 80; Fiedler 2008, 164; Sophoulis 2011, 102.

[16] Napoli 1997, 60, 104, 373–378.

[17] Dimitrov 1985, 119; Fiedler 1986, 461; Fiedler 2008, 152–153.

ramparts linking the outer precinct to the forts in the interior.[18] The shape of this fortification system strongly suggests its Türkic origin, and the very scarce archaeological evidence shows that the ramparts could be dated between the 5th and the 7th centuries.[19] However, there is no way to credit Asparukh's Bulgars with that the building of this system of circular fortifications, as other nomadic population, such as the Avars, may also come into question. After all, an updated version of the *Geography* of Pappus of Alexandria, in Armenian translation claims that "there are two mountains [in Thrace] and one river, the Danube, which has six tributaries and which forms a lake, and an island called Peuce. On this island lives Asparukh, son of Kubrat, a fugitive from the Khazars from the mountains of the Bulgars, who expelled the Avar nation and settled there".[20] The island of Peuce was not a real island, but the northern part of Dobrudja, near the Danube Delta (called Peuce in Antiquity). The alliance of this Avar group with the empire is documented by finds of gold and silver coins received as subsidies during the period between Heraclius and Constantine IV, when the Byzantine navy continued to exert its control along the Danube up to Durostorum. The gold and silver coins found in the northern Dobrudja were payments for an ally, which could well be the Avar group, split from the central power after 626, when the failed siege of Constantinople caused centrifugal movements of the subjected populations. Such coins have been found at:

Agighiol—1 silver 668–669;
Galaţi (hoard)—3 silver of 615–638, 4 silver of 647–659, 5 silver of 668–681;
Isaccea—1 gold of 659–664;
Istria—1 gold of 674–681;
Lunca (Ceamurlia commune)—1 gold of 674–680;
Niculiţel—1 silver of 674–681;
Piua Petrii (hoard)—1 silver of 641–668, 2 silver of 668–685;

[18] See the descriptions in Škorpil 1918, 119–134 and Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 117–118.

[19] Diaconu 1972 b, 316–318. After the field surveys during the Bulgarian occupation of Dobrudja in 1917, none of which produced any results (Škorpil 1918, 113–141), the excavations carried out 1953–1954 produced 6th- to 7th-century handmade pottery from the filling of the rampart.

[20] Ananias, 48. The author of this geographical treatise was long believed to have been Moses Chorenatzi (Beševliev 1981, 173–174), but the latter lived in the 5th century. The real author was Ananias of Širak (590–670). The interpolation about Asparuch belongs to the abridged version, written in the 9th century. See Spinei 2009, 80–81 for the late interpolations.

Tulcea—1 gold of 641–646;
Valea Teilor—2 silver of 641–646 and 668–673 (perhaps from a hoard).[21]

The hoard from Galaţi (which belongs to the same group) shows a long accumulation from Heraclius to Constantine IV. The stipends were most likely paid over a long period of time between Heraclius (most probably after 626) and Constantine IV. Heraclius is in fact known for having established an alliance with Kubrat at the time of the latter's conflict with the Avars.[22] The fortifications of Niculiţel could have well been built by this group, for the Byzantines, during a longer period than the short presence of Asparukh near the Danube Delta.

The Bulgar state established in 680 in the former Roman province Moesia challenged the Byzantine domination over the western coast of the Black Sea, dangerously close to the imperial capital. The security of the Black Sea region required a policy of containment of Bulgaria or even the destruction of the Bulgarian state which was growing fast. Upon his return from the exile in Crimea, and with military assistance from of the Bulgar khan Tervel (701–718), Emperor Justinian II gave the Bulgars the region of Zagora between Stara Planina and Burgas in 705. The treaty of 717 established the new frontier from Mileone (Jabalkovo, Haskovo region) to Cape Emona; Anchialos (Pomorie), Mesembria (Nesebăr) and Develtos (Burgas) remained in the Byzantine Empire. Zagora was recovered after the victory at Markellai (Krumovo, 7 km west of Karnobat) obtained by the Byzantine army in 756, or according to other opinions, in 760 or 761.[23]

In the course of the following Byzantine-Bulgar conflicts, naval operations in the Black Sea and on the Danube were a key component of the Byzantine strategy, which was based on attacking the enemy on two fronts. The fact that Bulgaria did not become a naval power (although some boats are said to have gone up the Drava River against the Franks in 827)[24] was a great advantage for the Byzantine offensive policy. This strategy of encirclement was applied by Constantine V, during the wars with Bulgaria

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[21] Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1996, 104–105; Iacob 2000, 485–498; Madgearu 2007, 270–271; Custurea, Talmaţchi 2011, 314.

[22] Beševliev 1981, 511–516.

[23] Theophanes, AM 6251 (transl. Mango, Scott, 596); Nikephoros, 73 (ed. Mango, 145); Beševliev 1971, 6–9; Browning 1975, 48; Beševliev 1981, 209–210; Gagova 1986, 67–69; Dimitrov 1992 a, 36–37; Sophoulis 2011, 90–93.

[24] *Annales Regni Francorum*, a. 827 (ed. Kurze, 25–26); Beševliev 1981, 285, 470–471; Eggers 1995, 62; Curta 2006, 158–159; Sophoulis 2011, 123, 297.

which started after the decisive victories against the Arabs (as a rule, the military effort was directed at Bulgaria when the other enemy, the Caliphate, was in crisis or defeated).[25] The main goal of Constantine V's campaigns was to stop the Bulgar expansion into Thrace, the most important Byzantine agricultural region of that period.[26] Durostorum was reached again by the Byzantine navy during these wars fought by Constantine V against Bulgaria. In 756, a fleet of 500 boats moved up the Danube, while the land army commanded by the emperor marched toward the Stara Planina range, obtaining the victory at Markellai. In 763, another fleet of 800 *chelandia* with 9,600 horsemen on board entered the Danube. Meanwhile, the land army advanced to Anchialos, where it won another victory on June 30, 763. In 767, the defeated Bulgars are said to have taken refuge in the swamps downstream from Durostorum. The large number of boats involved in those operations indicates the existence of some supply points along the river. However, all those attempts at restoring the Byzantine control over the Danube ended with the Bulgar victories of 792 and 796.[27]

The operations along the Danube are also documented by several lead seals dated to the 8th century. One of them belongs to a *strategos* called Phokas, which suggests the existence in Durostorum of an official receiving messages from a *theme* commander. This man was perhaps the chief of a *turma* (one of three subdivisions of a *theme*).[28] A pier found at Durostorum, radiocarbon-dated to 780 AD ± 200 may have been built during those naval campaigns that reached that city, even if some Bulgarian archaeologists suppose that the pier was used for trade only.[29] The large margin of error involved in the radiocarbon dating makes it impossible to decide on the chronology and historical significance of the pier.

Even if scattered, those bits of informaton suggest a continuous Byzantine concern with recuperating the positions lost along the Danube, including Durostorum, within the context of the 8th-century conflicts with Bulgaria. The presence of the imperial navy on the river represented a real threat

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[25] Howard-Johnston 2006, 344.

[26] Shepard 1995, 232–233.

[27] Theophanes, AM 6254, 6265 (transl. Mango, Scott, 599, 617); Nikephoros, 73, 76, 79 (ed. Mango, 144/145, 148/149, 152/153); Zonaras, XV, 8.4–19 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 279–281); Beševliev 1971, 5–17; Beševliev 1981, 209, 213–234; Gagova 1986, 67–69; Gjuzelev 1992, 24–25, 30; Busetto 1992, 323–330; Dimitrov 1992 a, 36–37; Curta 2006, 85–88; Sophoulis 2011, 93–95, 166–172.

[28] Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 15; Damian 2004, 290–291.

[29] Angelova, Koleva 2004, 22.

to Bulgaria. During the subsequent centuries, the navy appears to have cooperated with allies the Byzantine emperors summoned from the steppe lands to the north of the river. However, the rise of Bulgaria as a major power in the region, *ca*. 800, interrupted these attempts at restoring the Byzantine naval domination on the Danube. The Bulgars secured Durostorum with a restored precinct and a new gate, and a residence was built there for khan Omurtag (815–831).[30] After the failure of Emperor Nikephoros I's 811 campaign against Bulgaria, Krum (803–814) launched a counteroffensive in 812, which resulted in the conquest of Mesembria, Anchialos, Develtos, Sozopolis and Agathopolis. The attacks continued in Thrace in 813–815, until the decisive victory of the new emperor Leo V (813–820) at Mesembria in 814. The peace treaty of 816 divided the western coast of the Black Sea between Byzantium and Bulgaria. The Byzantines recuperated the port cities of Sozopolis and Agathopolis. Develtos appears to have been shared between the two powers along the river Sredetska. Mesembria and Anchialos were left to Bulgaria. The new frontier was established on the line Develtos—Agathonike (Orjakhovo)—Constantia (Simeonovgrad), up to the Hebros River (Maritsa). The access between Develtos and Maritsa was blocked by an earthen dike now known as Erkesija, which is 137 km long.[31]

To the north, the expansion of Bulgaria resulted in the occupation of parts of Walachia and Moldavia during the reign of Krum, shortly after the collapse of the Avar khanate. In 813, thousands of prisoners of war taken from Adrianople and Macedonia were moved to the so-called "Bulgaria beyond the Danube."[32] Much has been written on the exact location of this territory, but the right solution may only be provided by the archaeological evidence. Ninth-century century artifacts pertaining to an urban culture of Byzantine origin (clay water-pipes, bricks, and a specific kind of pottery mostly associated with Byzantine towns) have been found especially to the west and north-west from the city of Olteniţa (Chirnogi, Căscioarele,

[30] Angelova, Koleva 2004, 21–22; Atanasov 2012.

[31] Theophanes, AM 6303–6305 (transl. Mango, Scott, 672–675, 679, 682–686); Skylitzes, *Leo V the Armenian*, 1 (ed. Thurn, 13; trad. Flusin, 15; transl. Wortley, 5); Zonaras, XV, 17.15–19; 19.13–19 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 315–319, 321–322); Browning 1975, 49–50; Gagova 1986, 70–72; Browning 1986, 29; Dimitrov 1992 b, 43–45; Sophoulis 2011, 184–286. For the Erkesija wall, see Beševliev 1981, 476–477; Rašev 2005, 52; Curta 2006, 149–156; Fiedler 2008, 167.

[32] Leo Grammaticus, 231–232; Scriptor Incertus, 345–346; George Monachos, 817–818; Symeon, *Chronikon*, 131.9–10 (ed. Walgren, 235–236); Bănescu 1927, 14–15; Bănescu 1948, 6–7; Brezeanu 1984, 121–122; Teodor 1987, 2–3; Damian 2003, 483–484; Spinei 2009, 56–57; Teodor 2011, 95–96; Sophoulis 2011, 102, 256–257.

Greaca, Radovanu, Curcani, Mironeşti), as well in other places in Walachia. They must be associated with the Byzantines forcefully moved north of the Danube, on the road to the salt mines of the present-day counties of Prahova and Buzău. Similar artifacts have been found farther to the northeast, near the mouth of the river Siret (Dragosloveni, Budeşti, Câmpineanca, Gugeşti, Şendreni), the terminal of another salt road. The brick fortress at Slon (Prahova County) was also built for the Bulgars by the same Byzantines resettled beyond the Danube. This fortress was located in the Prahova salt area and its purpose was to defend the route to Transylvania across the Carpathian Mountains, through the Tabla Buţii pass.[33] The sudden appearance of 9th-century settlements south of the Roman dike between Vadul lui Isac and Tatarbunar, in southern Bessarabia, has also been linked to the same Byzantine prisoners.[34]

The territories north of the Danube in present-day Walachia and southern Moldavia appear to have occupied primarily because of the salt resources (vital to any medieval society), in addition to their strategic position as a buffer against the Khazars, then against the Magyars, and the Byzantine outpost at the mouths of the Danube (after 863). Byzantine sources show the lands north of the Danube to have been under their own commanders, and not under a direct or even very strict Bulgar control. Cordyles, the chief of the Byzantine prisoners, escaped in 836 and asked for assistance from emperor Theophilos (829–842). A fleet was sent in 837 or 838 to the Danube to rescue the former prisoners. The Bulgars summoned the Magyar warriors from *Levedia* (the region between the Don and the Bug to which they had moved after 830) to push back the Byzantine expedition.[35] The Magyars were at that time the new nomads in the area, who were usually hostile to Bulgaria. A campaign of the Bulgar army, which had reached the Dnieper River a few years before those events, may have well been directed against them.[36] To stop Magyar attacks, the Bulgars used as a defense line the Great Earthen Dike across Dobrudja, between Cochirleni on the Danube and Constanţa. This 54 km-long dike has ditches on both sides, in addition to 35 large and 28 small forts along

[33] Teodor 1987, 9–12; Comşa 1982–1984, 39–44; Damian 2003, 485–491; Ciupercă 2010, 279–289; Teodor 2011, 96–98.

[34] Postică, Hâncu, Tentiuc 1999, 288.

[35] Leo Grammaticus, 232; George Monachos, 818; Symeon, *Chronikon*, 131.11–12 (ed. Walgren, 236–237); Beševliev 1981, 354; Brezeanu 1984, 121–129; Božilov, Dimitrov 1985, 54–56; Treadgold 1988, 291; Kristó 1996, 15, 107–111; Zuckerman 1997 a, 55–59; Mladjov 1998, 87–90; Spinei 2006, 58, 64; Spinei 2009, 58.

[36] Beševliev 1981, 283; Spinei 2006, 66; Sophoulis 2011, 292–293.

the inner defence line. The Great Dike was most likely built in the 4th–5th centuries by the Late Roman army, but its repair in the 9th century is proved by finds of pottery from an excavation in Palas, near Constanţa.[37]

The increasing turmoil in the region between the Don and the Volga after 830, caused by the migrations of the Pechenegs and the Magyars, re-activated the Byzantine-Khazarian alliance which made possible the reestablishment of a true imperial administration in Crimea, in the form of the new theme of Cherson, created in 841 by Emperor Theophilos. Its 2,000 soldiers were commanded by the same Petronas, who had been sent to Sarkel in 839 to build a stronghold for the Khazars. The initial plan was to occupy a larger area, called the theme of *Klimata*. The name of the province was changed after some decades, becoming the theme of Cherson.[38]

In 860, Constantinople was attacked by a fleet of 200 ships carrying 8,000 Rus' warriors, who ravaged the suburbs and carried off a large amount of booty.[39] This event demonstrated that the Khazar allies of the Byzantine Empire could not be trusted as a real shield against invasions from the north. Defence against future attacks required the strengthening of the Byzantine positions in the north and the establishment of new and effective alliances, such as that made in the next year with the Magyars, by the future Apostles of the Slavs. Saints Constantine (Cyril) and Methodius, who were sent to Khazaria by Emperor Michael III (842–867), but encountered a party of Magyars on their way. That the Magyars were located between the Don and the Bug made them excellent allies against Rus' attacks. They were also in a good position to attack Bulgaria and the Frankish Empire, if needed. For more than three decades, the Magyars

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[37] The description of the Great Earthen Wall at Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 99–100. For the excavation at Palas: Panaitescu 1978 a, 241–245. For the Late Roman origin: Comşa 1951, 233–235; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 115; Petre 1973, 31; Bogdan-Cătăniciu 1996, 202–207; Napoli 1997, 102–104, 341–347, 354–355; Georgiev 2005, 23–40; Bogdan-Cătăniciu 2006, 412–418. For the supposed construction in the 9th century: Diaconu 1973–1975, 199–209; Rašev 1987, 52–53; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 78–79; Rašev 2005, 53; Fiedler 2008, 168.

[38] Skylitzes, *Theophilus*, 22 (ed. Thurn, 73; transl. Flusin, 66–67; transl. Wortley, 75); Wozniak 1975, 56–62; Noonan 1992, 114; Whittow 1996, 233–235; Zuckerman 1997, 51–58 (who has demonstrated that the threat was represented by the Magyars, and that the right date for Sarkel building is 839, not 833). The name *Klimata* concerns the small zones around the fortresses from the mountain region of the peninsula (Zuckerman 1997 a, 67). The name change reflected the abandonment of the region outside the town (Zuckerman 1997 a, 67–73).

[39] Skylitzes, *Michael III and Theodora*, 18 (ed. Thurn, 107; transl. Flusin, 94; transl. Wortley, 107); *Russian Primary Chronicle*, 60; Franklin, Shepard 1996, 50–55; Whittow 1996, 239.

therefore replaced the Khazars as the guarantors of the Byzantine security in the lands north of the Black Sea. Unlike the Khazars, the Magyars had no interest in Crimea, a good portion of which was thus turned into the theme of Cherson established in 841.[40]

A good defense against the maritime attacks of the Rus' also required the control of certain strategic points on the western coast of the Black Sea, but this region was partially lost after the treaty of 816, which gave to Bulgaria the ports of Anchialos and Mesembria, as well as a part of Develtos.[41] Furthermore, Bulgaria received another, 25-mile wide strip of land at the beginning of the reign of Boris (852–889), as Empress Theodora (842–856) wanted to establish good relations with the Bulgar ruler during the concomitant Byzantine campaigns in the East. After 860, therefore it became imperative for the Byzantines to recover as much as possible of the Black Sea coast, which would otherwise be available to northern invaders if Bulgaria turned hostile. The Rus' danger was thus a strong reason for an offensive Byzantine policy against Bulgaria. Another reason, no less important, was the alliance forged by the Bulgar khan Boris with the Frankish Empire in 862. This alliance changed the balance of power in South-Eastern Europe. The Byzantine emperor Michael III reacted immediately by attacking Bulgaria in 863. Boris was defeated and converted to Christianity under the name of Michael. Following the war, Emperor Michael III recuperated Develtos, Anchialos, and Mesembria.[42] Their recovery made possible the building of a strong defensive system directed both against Bulgaria and the Rus', a system that represented a first attempt at the rebuilding of Byzantine hegemony on the western Black Sea coast, one century before the reconquest of the Danube region.

If the northern element of the defensive system directed against the Rus' was the Cherson theme, its southernmost element was Mesembria, a port now turned into the headquarters of a *kleisura*. The *kleisurai* were initially military structures located on the frontier, especially around mountain passes or other points of access to and from the empire. The first *kleisurai* were established in the East in the 7th–8th centuries, and

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[40] For the alliance with the Magyars, see Nikolov 1997, 79–92; Zuckerman 1997 a, 51–74. For the theme see Zuckerman 1997 b, 210–222.

[41] Browning 1975, 50–51; Beševliev 1981, 190–206; Gjuzelev 1992, 25; Dimitrov 1992 b, 43–45.

[42] Skylitzes, *Michael III and Theodora*, 7 (ed. Thurn, 90–91; transl. Flusin, 80–81; transl. Wortley, 90–92); Zonaras, XVI, 2.1–15 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 387–389); Browning 1975, 54–55; Gjuzelev 1978, 52; Browning 1986, 30; Gjuzelev 1992, 25; Gagova 1986, 73; Fine 1991, 113–130; Dimitrov 1992 a, 38–40; Dimitrov 1992 b, 47; Curta 2006, 166–168.

they were later transformed into small themes in the 9th–10th centuries. The commanders of *kleisurai* (*kleisurarches*) were under the direct command of the emperor, but had a rank lower than that of the *strategoi* of themes.[43] In the Balkans, the first *kleisura* was organized on the Strymon valley in Macedonia, in 688.[44] In Mesembria, the lead seals of several *kleisurarches* are now dated with certainty by their archaeological contexts between 864 and 917. Another *kleisura* was created in Sozopolis around 840.[45] Ivan Jordanov first believed that those lead seals should be dated to the third quarter of the 11th century, for he assumed that the *kleisura* functioned in parallel to the *katepanate* of Mesembria.[46] We shall see that that *katepanate* was indeed organized during that period as a shield against the rebels who had taken power in Paradunavon in 1073. Two *katepanoi* of Mesembria are known, Simeon and Valatzertes (see chapter II.1). No mountain pass existed at Mesembria, but the word *kleisura* received the meaning of any small frontier area organized for defense. Its mission was to protect the naval base at Mesembria, which was a staging post on the route to the Danube and the Crimea.

Between the Crimea and Mesembria, the Danube Delta was another region of strategic importance, because it was on the route taken by Rus' boats, as indicated in the *De Administrando Imperio*.[47] It is thus not surprising that there is some evidence for a form of Byzantine military organization in this area in the 9th century. The existence of a Danube Delta theme called Lykostomion was inferred from the dedication of Photios' *Lexicon* to a certain Thomas, *protospatharios* and *archon* of Lykostomion. The *Lexicon* was written around 880–890. Hélène Ahrweiler suggested that the 9th-century Lykostomion was the same as that recorded in the Danube Delta region in the 14th century.[48] This identification was then endorsed by many other historians, especially from Romania,[49] but rejected by Vasilka Tăpkova-Zaimova, who maintained that the 9th-century Lykostomion

[43] Ahrweiler 1960, 81–82; Oikonomides 1972, 342; Ahrweiler 1974 a, 216–218; Ferluga 1976, 71–85; Haldon 1999, 79, 114.

[44] Stavridou-Zafraka 2000, 128–129; Krsmanović 2008, 129.

[45] Jordanov 2003 a, 119–120, nr. 47.2, 159–160, nr. 74.1; Jordanov, Žekova 2007, 118, nr. 308; Jordanov 2009, 454–455, nr. 1340–1345.

[46] Jordanov 1993, 140, nr. 280, 281.

[47] Constantine Porphyrogenitus, IX, 91–102 (ed. Moravcsik, 62/63).

[48] Ahrweiler 1966, 89–90.

[49] For instance: P. Ş. Năsturel, book review of Ahrweiler 1966, RESEE, 4, 1966, 3–4, 649–651; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 12; Florescu, Ciobanu 1972, 381–382; Iliescu 1978, 234; Diaconu 1981 a, 218; Diaconu 1994 a, 368; Barnea 1997, 355; Barnea 2000, 296–297; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1998–2003, 163; Damian 2004, 286.

was probably a place in Thessaly, Epirus, or Acarnania. Tăpkova-Zaimova noted that no other sources mention the Lykostomion-on-the-Danube at such an early date.[50] Likewise, Ahrweiler's identification of the so-called *archon Boulgarias* mentioned on some seals with a Byzantine commander of a Bulgarian maritime theme, although accepted by Ion Barnea,[51] Petre Diaconu[52] and Robert Browning,[53] has eventually proved to be wrong. It is now clear that the title in question applied to the Bulgarian ruler Boris-Michael.[54]

Under those circumstances, the location of the Lykostomion theme somewhere in the Danube region (at Periprava, as Octavian Iliescu thought, or in some other place) is in need of supplementary proof. No archaeological remains of a 9th-century fortress have yet been found in the Vâlcov-Periprava area, despite several field surveys, although potsherds from Letea, near Periprava, attest to a 9th- to 11th-century settlement.[55] Yet, the possibility of a Lykostomion theme in the Lower Danube area results also from the inscription on a lead seal found at Isaccea in 1993, which belongs to the *stratilates* John Chaldos, the *strategos* of Chaldia, a theme located on the southern shore of the Black Sea. That commander took part in a plot against Michael III in 867.[56] The seal thus shows the existence of the Byzantine authority on the site of ancient Noviodunum around 867. This further suggests the existence of a theme in the area, possibly that of Lykostomion. In addition, a *solidus* struck for Basil I and Constantine (868–879) was discovered in unknown circumstances near the village of Suvorovo (Ismail, Odessa region, Ukraine) in 1997.[57] The place is significant, because it is located near the Vadul lui Isac-Tatarbunar earthen dike mentioned above, and next to a presumed fortress of that same period.[58] Since gold coins from this period are very rare in the lands north of the river Danube, its presence at a small distance from the supposed Lykostomion theme is really significant.

The contacts between the *strategos* of Chaldia and a commander at Noviodunum attested by that lead seal could have concerned security

50 Tăpkova-Zaimova 1970, 82–86.
51 Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 12; Barnea 2000, 296.
52 Diaconu 1981 a, 218.
53 Browning 1975, 137.
54 Tăpkova-Zaimova 1970, 83. For these seals, see Jordanov 2001, 31–34.
55 Iliescu 1978, 234; Iliescu 1994, 244–245; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 67–68.
56 Barnea 1993 a, 55–56; Barnea 1997, 355.
57 Russev, Fokeev 2001–2002, 183–185.
58 Postică, Hâncu, Tentiuc 1999, 289.

problems in the Black Sea region, because the mission of the Chaldia theme was the defense of the southern coast against the attacks of the Rus'. The provinces of Chaldia and Paphlagonia were created in 820 after a Rus' maritime invasion that affected the city of Amastris.[59] When the Rus' launched another, much more destructive attack against Constantinople in 860, the solution was to recover the ports previously taken by Bulgaria, but also the mouths of the Danube, in order to revamp the defense system in the Black Sea region In this way, the advanced position at Cherson was inserted into a wider security system, completed after 863 by the creation of the Lykostomion theme, located between Cherson and the western coast ports. The defensive system created after 863 in the western Black Sea area ensured the security of Constantinople against the Rus' and Bulgaria, while the alliance with the Magyars secured the stability in the north. Therefore, the establishment of a theme in the area of the mouths of the Danube was required by the threats to the security in the Black Sea area after 860. No such military reasons could be invoked for any other place called Lykostomion in the 9th-century Byzantium. This substantiates the hypothesis put forward by H. Ahrweiler, as Vasilka Tăpkova-Zaimova has not explained which strategic task could a theme of Lykostomion serve in Thessaly, the Tempe valley, or in Epirus. None of the places mentioned in her study had any military importance in the 9th century.

Ion Barnea claimed that Lykostomion was the headquarters of the Byzantine navy in the Black Sea,[60] but this could hardly have been the case, since the naval base of Cherson in Crimea was of far greater importance. The theme of Lykostomion included the maritime sector of the Danube, but not the area north of the Great Earthen Dike, for that military structure had been established at the height of Bulgar power. It is more probable that a buffer zone existed between the Bulgar and the Byzantine territories in Dobrudja.[61] During this period, the Byzantine navy was no longer in a position to control Durostorum as it had been at some points in the 7th and 8th centuries; during the ninth century, there is clear evidence that the town was in Bulgar hands. The base at Lykostomion was then a staging post on the coastal route to Cherson. There is no proof that this base was used by the Byzantine navy for the repatriation of the

59 Treadgold 1988–1989, 140–143; Whittow 1996, 254–255.
60 Barnea 1993 b, 584–585.
61 Harhoiu 2000, 353.

prisoners escaping from the lands north of the river Danube.[62] It came into existence only after 863.

On the basis of the alleged existence in Capidava of a ninth-century Byzantine fortress, Radu Florescu once believed that the Lykostomion theme came into being at some point during the last third of the 8th century, shortly after the successful campaigns led by Emperor Constantine V against Bulgaria. In his view, the Byzantine domination extended as far south as the Small Earthen Dike between Cochirleni and Constanţa, which he believed to have marked the Byzantine-Bulgar frontier.[63] If so, the territorial expansion of Bulgaria during the reign of Krum left no room for any Byzantine territory extending as far south. While it is theoretically possible that the theme was established first during the reign of Constantine V,[64] its operation must have been interrupted between 812 and 863. On the other hand, there is no proof that the Small Earthen Dike was erected in the late eighth century.

The theme of Lykostomion was involved in the Byzantine-Bulgarian war, which began in 894, when the Bulgarian ruler Symeon (893–927) retook Mesembria and Anchialos. Emperor Leo VI (886–912) ordered a counteroffensive in southern Bulgaria combined with a naval operation on the Danube. He summoned the Magyar allies, for his own forces were apparently not sufficient (the Byzantines were engaged at that same time in war with the Arabs in Anatolia). The action followed a defensive plan based on the theme of Lykostomion and on cooperation with the Magyars, who were at that moment the masters of the region known as *Atelkuz* (between the Dnieper or the Bug and the Danube). The Magyars had been expelled by the Pechenegs from Levedia, and they had moved to Atelkuz ca. 889. Now close to the Danube, they were useful allies in a war against Bulgaria. The Magyars ruled by Arpad and Kusan crossed the Danube on boats of the Byzantine navy, and then ravaged northern Bulgaria, winning two or three battles. A war on two fronts was too much for Symeon (who apparently put up some fierce resistance in Dorostolon).[65] Realizing that he could rely on nomads, much like Leo VI, he appealed for help from the Pechenegs, who promptly invaded the land of their enemies, the Magyars.

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62 As advocated by Diaconu 1981 a, 218 and Custurea 1986, 276.

63 Florescu, Ciobanu 1972, 381–387; Florescu 1986, 171–177.

64 In such a case, the seals of eighth-century military officials found in Durostorum could be ascribed to officers of that theme.

65 The ancient, Latin name of *Durostorum* is rendered *Dorystolon* or *Dorostolon* in 9th–10th centuries sources written in Greek.

Arpad was thus forced to leave Bulgaria, and the Magyars soon after that left for Pannonia. With Pecheneg assistance, Symeon was able to restore his power on the Danube. The war of 894–896 ended with a major Bulgarian victory at Bulgarophygon (southern Thrace), in the spring of 896. The theme of Lykostomion must have ceased to exist after that defeat, which drastically changed the balance of power in the western Black Sea area.[66]

The sudden increase of the Pecheneg power required a change of the Byzantine policies in the northern Black Sea region, for the Pechenegs were a real threat to Cherson. Like the Magyars, they seem to have occupied the interior of Crimea.[67] One obvious solution was to turn them into imperial allies. In 917, the *strategos* of Cherson, John Bogas, in fact requested their military assistance in yet another war against Symeon. He convinced the Pechenegs to march toward the Danube, while the Byzantine fleet was sent to transport them over to the southern bank. The dispute between Bogas and the commander of the imperial navy Romanos Lekapenos (the future emperor) prevented that action, and the Byzantine army remained without the allied Pecheneg forces. That was a great advantage for Symeon, who directed his troops to the southern conflict area, where he won the crushing victory of Acheloos (near Anchialos), on August 20th, 917 against the army led by general Leo Phokas.[68] Some historians believe that the Bulgarians were allied with the Magyars in 917,[69] but the source on which such an interpretation is based (Al-Masudi) refers most probably to the Magyar and Pecheneg attacks of 934.[70] By the Byzantine-Bulgarian treaty of 927, Anchialos entered thus again under Bulgarian rule, together with the ports of Mesembria, Develtos, Sozopolis,

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[66] Leo, *Taktika*, 18. 40 (ed. Dennis, 452/453); *Annales Regni Francorum*, a. 896 (ed. Kurze, 129–130); Symeon, *Chronikon*, 133. 17–21 (ed. Walgren, 276–277); Theophanes Continuatus, 358–359; Constantine Porphyrogenitus, XL, 8–20 (ed. Moravcsik, 176/177); Skylitzes, *Leo VI the Wise*, 12, 14 (ed. Thurn, 176–178; transl. Flusin, 148–150; transl. Wortley, 170–172); Zonaras, XVI, 12.18–29 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 442–444); Gjuzelev 1978, 52; Božilov 1980, 73–81; Wozniak 1984, 303; Dimitrov 1986, 67–68; Gjuzelev 1996, 228; Kristó 1996, 182–190; Tougher 1997, 176–280; Howard-Johnston 2000, 342–354; Spinei 2006, 73; Spinei 2009, 62; Todorov 2010, 318–319. For the migration of Hungarians to Atelkuz and its location, see Oikonomides 1965, 69–72; Božilov, Dimitrov 1985, 57–68; Malamut 1995, 110; Zuckerman 1997 a, 61–66; Spinei 2006, 62–63; Spinei 2009, 63–64.

[67] Obolensky 1979, 129.

[68] Nicholas I, *Letters*, 60–63; Theophanes Continuatus, ed. Bekker, 387–390; Skylitzes, *Constantinos VII* (*913–959*), 8 (ed. Thurn, 203–204; transl. Flusin, 172; transl. Wortley, 198–199); Zonaras, XVI, 17.1–4 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 464–465); Wozniak 1984, 304–306; Dimitrov 1986, 75–77; Haldon 2001, 87–88; Todorov 2010, 323–324.

[69] Božilov 1973 a, 14; Dimitrov 1986, 75–76; Mladjov 1998, 120; Makk 1999, 12.

[70] Diaconu 1970, 18–19; Spinei 2006, 168.

and Agathopolis. The Byzantine control on the western Black Sea coast and the security of Constantinople against Rus' attacks were thus seriously endangered.[71]

Because the Pechenegs were quickly growing into the most important power in the steppe lands north of the Black Sea, it was necessary to stop them by supporting their rivals. This was the second solution found for the Pecheneg problem. The Rus' were a suitable partner, because they were at the same time enemies of the Khazars and of the Pechenegs. During the first half of the 10th century, the Byzantine Empire broke the alliance with the Khazars, who were no longer of any use, because their power had declined. On the other hand, the new missionary policy started after 860 opposed an alliance with a Judaic state. It is true that the same Rus' were potential enemies of the Byzantine Empire, but they were not able to launch offensives toward the Black Sea if they were hold back by the Pechenegs who controlled the Dnieper cataracts. For that reason, it was imperative to manage the hostility between the Rus' and the Pechenegs by means of a balance policy.[72] The joint raid of the Magyars and Pechenegs in 934 into Bulgaria and the Byzantine Empire[73] only showed how serious the danger was, and that required using the Rus' to put the breaks on the Pechenegs, even if the two populations were traditional enemies.

In 940, the Rus' prince Oleg started a war against the Khazars at the request of Emperor Roman I Lekapenos (920–944), who wished to punish the Khazars for their alleged persecution of Christians, but a Khazar chief persuaded Oleg to turn against the emperor and to attack Constantinople. The invasion took place on June 11th, 941, under the common command of Oleg and Igor. A fleet composed of 1000 small boats besieged the capital and destroyed the suburbs much like in 860, but it was finally defeated by means of the "Greek Fire".[74] The Byzantine diplomacy was at an impasse, but the idea of using the Rus' as an imperial instrument in the northern Black Sea area was not abandoned. The Rus' launched

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[71] Diaconu 1970, 14–15; Gjuzelev 1981, 17; Wozniak 1984, 304–306; Fine 1991, 149–150, 161; Malamut 1995, 107–109.

[72] Toynbee 1973, 458–460; Wozniak 1984, 301–315; Huxley 1984, 84–87.

[73] Theophanes Continuatus, 422–423; Masoudi, II, 59–64; Skylitzes, *Romanos Lekapenos*, 29 (ed. Thurn, 228; transl. Flusin, 192; transl. Wortley, 220); Moravcsik 1970, 55–56; Diaconu 1970, 17–19; Oikonomides 1973, 1–3; Makk 1999, 12; Stephenson 2000, 40; Curta 2006, 188; Spinei 2006, 109, 168; Spinei 2009, 92.

[74] *Russian Primary Chronicle*, 72; Ostrogorsky 1956, 303; Noonan 1992, 115–116; Zuckerman 1995, 256–257, 264–265; Whittow 1996, 257; Franklin, Shepard 1996, 113–117; Noonan 1998–1999, 210–211.

in 943 another attack against the Khazar fortresses Sudak and Tmutorokan, and then against the Arab territories in the Caucasus. Tmutorokan was taken. This gave the Rus' the opportunity to gain a foothold on one side of the Kerč Strait. Some have argued that Tmutorokan had already been taken in 913, during a Rus' campaign to the Caspian Sea,[75] but more recent studies have demonstrated that Rus' conquest of the town cannot be dated before 943. In 944, the Rus' planned a new raid into Bulgaria and Byzantium, this time in alliance with the Pechenegs, but the invasion was eventually stalled by Byzantine bribes for Prince Igor. Moreover, Igor was thus convinced to enter a treaty with the Byzantine Empire, in 944 or 945. The Byzantine enovys met Igor somewhere on the Danube frontier of Bulgaria. The prince promised to defend the theme of Cherson theme and the isthmus of Crimea against the "Black Bulgars," which were apparently coming from the lands north of the Sea of Azov, as well as against the Pechenegs, and to stay away from the mouth of the Dnieper. At the same time, the treaty allowed the "Black Bulgars" to attack the Khazar territories in Crimea, because that apparently served the Byzantine interests.[76]

The Rus' attack of 941 made necessary a drastic overhaul of the organization of the navy. Emperor Roman I Lekapenos, a former naval officer (*drongarios*), took measures to improve the Black Sea defense.[77] According to some, those were the circumstances under which the staging post at Tomis (mentioned in sources by its new name *Constantia* or *Constanteia*) was restored. The surge in finds of Byzantine coins from Constanţa, all of which may be dated to this period, has already been associated with the revival of that town (another port of call was perhaps at Mangalia, the old Greek and Roman town of Callatis).[78] Such Byzantine staging ports had both commercial and military functions.[79] Taking into account the peaceful Bulgarian-Byzantine relations established after 927, the settlement of some Byzantine staging posts in Dobrudja could not be excluded, but the scarce archaeological and numismatic evidence cannot support that hypothesis.

According to *De Administrando Imperio*, in the mid-tenth century Bulgaria had control of Dobrudja up to the mouths of the Danube, which

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75 Stokes 1960, 507–514, Soloviev 1960, 574.

76 *Russian Primary Chronicle*, 73–77; Diaconu 1970, 20; Obolensky 1979, 130; Wozniak 1984, 307; Huxley 1984, 85–86; Whittow 1996, 257; Spinei 2006, 170, 174; Spinei 2009, 92–93; Gordiyenko 2012, 165.

77 Ahrweiler 1966, 106.

78 Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1991 a, 304–308; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1995–1996, 289–290.

79 Ahrweiler 1974 b, 163–164.

means that Constantia was within Bulgarian territory. The Rus' who sailed along the coast "come to the Selinas, to the so-called branch of the Danube River. And until they are past the river Selinas, the Pechenegs keep pace with them. And if it happens that the sea casts a 'monoxylon' on shore, they all put in to land, in order to present a united opposition to the Pechenegs. But after the Selinas they fear nobody, but, entering the territory of Bulgaria, they come to the mouth of the Danube. From the Danube they proceed to the Konopas, and from the Konopas to Constantia, and from Constantia to the river of Varna, and from Varna they come to the river Ditzina, all of which are Bulgarian territory. From the Ditzina they reach the district of Mesembria".[80] Given that the treaty of 927 restored to Bulgaria all the ports between Mesembria and Agathopolis, it is unlikely that the Empire could have maintained two small ports of call in Dobrudja, and the island of Lykostomion. While the number of Byzantine coins in Dobrudja increased after the middle of the 10th century (according to finds not only from Mangalia and Constanţa, but also from Isaccea, Hârşova, Capidava and other points),[81] that is not enough to prove a restoration of the Byzantine power in northern Dobrudja. The increasing number of coin finds is simply a reflection of the accelerated commercial exchanges between Bulgaria and the Byzantine Empire.

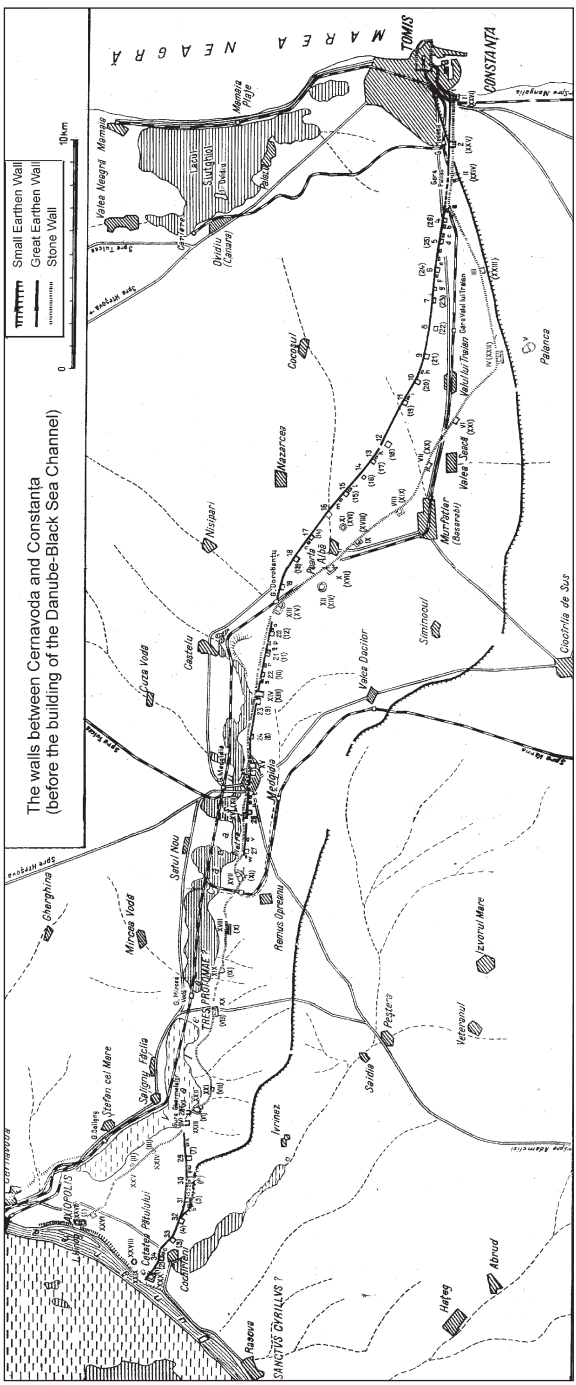
During the period when Bulgaria had control over the entire region now known as Dobrudja, the so-called "Stone Dike" was erected, which is the most recent among the three linear fortifications across that land from Cernavoda to Constanţa (the Stone Dike overlaps the Small as well as the Great Earthen Dikes) (see Fig. 1). The Stone Dike is an earthen rampart, 59 km long and 1,7–2,2 m thick, surmounted by a wall built of limestone blocks and mortar, with a ditch to the north. Twenty-six forts with an area between 2,5 and 10,8 hectares were erected along the dike. Pottery of the Dridu type, which is typical for the 10th century was found in some of those forts. Moreover, a *solidus* struck in 945–959 is known from fort XIV.[82] An excavation made along the dike at Medgidia identified a fireplace with the same type of pottery, which was used when the foundation of the wall was built (the stone traces of soot from the fireplace).[83] The limestone blocks

[80] Constantine Porphyrogenitus, IX, 91–102 (ed. Moravcsik, 62/63).

[81] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1996, 280–285.

[82] Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 100–104, 111–114; Petre 1973, 27–31; Papuc 1992, 328; Bogdan-Cătăniciu 1996, 202–207; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 80–84; Bogdan-Cătăniciu 2006, 413–417.

[83] Papuc 2000, 58 (for some unknown reason, Papuc dates the fireplace to the 11th century).



1. The dikes between Cernavoda and Constanța (after Bamea, Ștefănescu 1971, 168, map IV)

carved in smaller dimensions than in the Roman period were extracted from quarries like that in Medgidia.[84] Petre Diaconu in fact believed that the wall had been erected by the Bulgarians between 986 and 1000 as a defense line against the Byzantine-controlled area in northern Dobrudja.[85] According to other opinions, the dike was erected by the Byzantines during the reign of Basil II.[86]

There is an incontrovertible proof that the Stone Dike was built in the 10th century, namely the Cyrillic inscription discovered in 1950 in fort VIII near the village of Mircea Vodă (Constanţa County). The inscription, although damaged, reads, translated by the Slavicist Damian Bogdan as: "... against the Greeks/ in the year 6451/ at the time of Demetrius/ župan ..."[87] Later, it became clear that the stone from Mircea Vodă has two inscriptions, carved at two different moments. The first one includes two lines from the end of an inscription which mentions the year 6451 (943 AD), while the last two lines referring to a *župan* named Demetrius were carved with less precision at a later date.[88] Župan Demetrius has therefore nothing to do with the events of 943, whatever those may have been. Some believed that in that year the Pechenegs invaded Bulgaria, despite the failure of the campaign planned by Igor.[89] However, no source mentions any Pecheneg raid either in 943 or in 944.

The region behind the dike was a march-like district of medieval Bulgaria. It appears that the rock monastery built in the chalk quarry in Murfatlar-Basarabi was there at the time the wall was built, for the stones were extracted from that same quarry.[90] One of the Cyrillic inscriptions in

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[84] Panaitescu 1978 b, 247–251.

[85] Diaconu 1962, 1215–1236; Diaconu 1965 b, 189–199, 383–394; Diaconu 1972 a, 375–378.

[86] Cihodaru 1963, 1128–1129; Cihodaru 1965, 267; Salamon 1971, 495; Barnea 1975, 96; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 84.

[87] Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 64, 69; Božilov 1973 a, 12–13; Petkov 2008, 38. The inscription was first published by Comşa 1951, 237 and Bogdan, Comşa, Panaitescu 1951, 122–128. Its authenticity was questioned by Nandriş 1960, 530–534, who noted that the language presents old Russian and not old Bulgarian features, as one could expect: "Whereas the philological arguments plead, in Bogdan's view, for a Russian version of the text, palaeographically the inscription is South Slavonic". A refugee from Communist Romania, Nandriş lived at that time in London and was vehemently anti-Communist. His intention seems to have been to cast doubts about what he viewed as a forgery designed to prove the earliest Russian presence in Romania. His views were not adopted by anyone else, and the inscription is still viewed as one of the oldest Slavonic monuments.

[88] Bogdan 1978, 151.

[89] Božilov 1973 a, 23; Stănescu 1974, 396; Diaconu 1981 a, 219; Petkov 2008, 38.

[90] Curta 1999, 129–149; Madgearu 1999–2000, 20; Curta 2006, 229–232. The most recent study on the rock monastery in Damian, Samson, Vasile 2009, 117–158.

that monastery is dated to the mid-10th century on paleographic grounds, and it is also known that the monastery must have been in existence during the Prince Svyatoslav's campaign to Bulgaria (968), because the monks carved in the church B3 some figures of Rus' (Varangian) warriors and even Svyatoslav's tamgha sign.[91] Another inscription from church B4 reads ZHUPAN I IMAET GEORGE ONC TEBE ESTEK KRAIN I REZHETE, which could be translated as "the župan and guardian George promises you eighty pieces of gold and so must it be!" This reading has been corrected by Kazimir Popkonstantinov, who believes that the word *župan* should be replaced with *Tupai* (the name of the man who built a church consecrated to Saint George).[92] If so, there is no other mention of a *župan* in central Dobrudja except that from Mircea Vodă.

The limestone block with the inscription was not found *in situ*, but had apparently fallen next to the precinct of fort VIII. The block was apparently extracted from the wall (as the late Eugen Comşa, the author of the discovery, once told me); it was therefore not part of the foundation.[93] It is obvious that the block was once in the wall, but its exact position is unknown. On the other hand, it is sure that the stone was taken from another construction, because mortar remains may still be observed on the block (it is important to note on the other hand that the wall was not built with mortar). This construction was most probably a monument erected to commemorate a battle (several Bulgar inscriptions attest to that practice).[94] Because the block belonged to the elevated part of the wall, the added words "Župan Demetrius" were visible, and they could be linked with a building activity done under the leadership of Demetrius, when the wall was built or when it was repaired, sometime after 943. It is more probable that the block with the inscription was inserted during a repaired wall at the time when the dike served as protection against the Byzantine forces in northern Dobrudja, that is between 986 and 1000 (see below).[95] However, taking into account the huge amount of work required for the building of the wall *a fundamentis*, it seems more probable that the insertion of the block was done at some point during the

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[91] Popkonstantinov 1987, 120–125 (for the inscription); Pintescu 1999, 75; Agrigoroaei 2006, 25–49; Fetisov 2007, 299–314; Spinei 2009, 54.

[92] Popkonstantinov 1987, 128–132.

[93] As maintained by Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 64, 69, 114, and by other authors who reproduced their views.

[94] Bogdan, Comşa, Panaitescu 1951, 129.

[95] The idea that a repair made after 986 could be proved on the basis of the Mircea Vodă inscription was first put forward by Florescu, Ciobanu 1972, 388–389.

reign of Symeon or that of Peter.[96] Paolo Squatriti has in fact advanced the idea that the dike was only a "pharaonic work" intended to commemorate the power and the prestige of one of the Bulgarian rulers, without any real military purpose.[97] However, the addition of 26 large forts to the dike strongly suggests that it did indeed have a military function in the 10th century. This linear fortification must have been conceived as a protection against Pecheneg attacks directed at Preslav and other Bulgarian settlements, mostly because it was provided with forts for soldiers.

Not surprisingly, the region next to the Stone Dike was well developed and populated, as a recent archaeological excavation has demonstrated. A large 10th-century settlement with stone houses was identified during the rescue excavations made in May 2011 near the village Valul lui Traian, not far from Constanţa. A cemetery of more than 300 graves was also found near the northern side of the Small Earthen Dike (some of the graves cut through the rampart). From the area of the same settlement a small part of a coin hoard with 50 *nomismata* was recovered in 1935. The eight known pieces have been struck for Constantine VII and Romanos II between 945 and 959. Another small hoard of only 9 *nomismata* issued for Constantine VII and Romanos II and another for Nikephoros II was found in the surroundings. Both hoards were hidden during the events of 969–971. Other *nomismata* issued between 945 and 959 are known from various points along the Stone Dike or just behind it, at Oltina, Rasova, Urluia, Basarabi (Murfatlar), and Constanţa.[98]

After the treaty with Igor, the Byzantine Empire tried to maintain a balance between the Rus' and the Pechenegs, in order to contain the power of both. This reversal of alliances in the Black Sea region led to a joint action against Bulgaria in 966, in addition to a Magyar raid against the Empire. Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (963–969) stopped the payment of the usual tribute for Bulgaria, which had been established by the treaty of 927, and prepared for a large-scale campaign, which had to be cancelled at the last moment because of a rebellion in Antioch.[99] Instead, the emperor

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[96] Rašev 1987, 55–56; Rašev 2005, 57; Curta 2006, 230.

[97] Squatriti 2005, 86–90.

[98] Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 23; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1996, 281; Poenaru-Bordea, Ocheşeanu, Popeea 2004, 131–133; Custurea, Matei 2007, 105–113; Custurea, Talmaţchi 2011, 292, 374, 376; Cliante et alii 2012, 294–295.

[99] Leo the Deacon, IV. 5 (ed. Talbot, Sullivan, 109–111); Skylitzes, *Nikephoros II Phokas*, 20 (ed. Thurn, 277; transl. Flusin, 232; transl. Wortley, 265); Zonaras, XVI, 27.13–15 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 513); Ostrogorsky 1956, 315–317; Stokes 1962, 50–54, 466–467; Gjuzelev 1981, 17; Fine 1991, 181–182; Busetto 1996, 11; Whittow 1996, 294, 326; Treadgold 1997, 502; Spinei 2006, 112.

chose to punish Bulgaria by proxies, namely his northern allies, the Rus'. It was a better option to strike this country from the north, because an offensive from the south required access to the mountain passes across Stara Planina, which were too dangerous for the Byzantine army. The emperor was certainly aware of the catastrophe of 811, when a Byzantine army was ambushed and slaughtered in one of those passes, in which the usual combat formation was impossible to deploy.[100]

Following the order of Nikephoros Phokas, the *strategos* of Cherson Kalokyros convinced Prince Svyatoslav of Kiev (945–971) to attack Bulgaria, but Kalokyros acted by his own treacherous interest, using the alliance with the Rus' warriors for his own plan to seize the imperial throne. He suggested to Svyatoslav that in return, he would keep Bulgaria, in addition to a generous payment of 1,500 pounds of gold pounds (around 500 kg). In the summer of 968, the Kievan prince launched his campaign with an army said to be as large as 40,000 men, with which he reached the mouths of the Danube and then Dorostolon. The Bulgarian army, of about 30,000 men tried to defend the city, but was easily defeated, and Svyatoslav conquered several fortresses in eastern Bulgaria, including the capital at Preslav. Some Bulgarian aristocrats went to the Rus' side, choosing that over the Byzantine rule. Thus, the rising Rus' maritime power gained control of the Lower Danube region, with the consent and support of the Byzantine emperor. This appears to have been a major strategic mistake, for the Rus' gained control not only over the river, but also over a country of great strategic and economic importance. Svyatoslav was fully aware of the real meaning of his achievement. According to the Russian Primary Chronicle, he declared that "I do not care to remain in Kiev, but should prefer to live in Pereiaslavetz on the Danube, since that is the centre of my realm, where all riches are concentrated; gold, silks, wine, and various fruits from Greece, silver and horses from Hungary and Bohemia, and from Rus' furs, wax, honey, and slaves".[101] Indeed, precisely at this time the Danube turned again into an important axis of trade route between Central Europe and the East, at the same time as the revival of urban life in Central Europe and the sedentization of the Magyar nomads. Jewish merchants are known to have traveled from Spain to Khazaria by several routes, one of which followed the Danube, while Kievan traders are said to have already reached the German towns on the Upper Danube River in

[100] Marinow 2011, 453.
[101] *Russian Primary Chronicle*, 85–86.

the mid-9th century. In that respect, gaining control of the Lower Danube was both a military and an economic target for the Rus'.[102]

Confronted with such a critical situation, Nikephoros Phokas decided to force the return to Rus' of at least some of Svyatoslav's forces by asking the Pechenegs to attack Kiev. He acted like Symeon during the Magyar invasion in Bulgaria in 894–895, but with less success, since the Rus' were a redoubtable force, difficult to stop by means of a simple Pecheneg raid. In fact, the Rus' prince showed no desire to abandon his expansionist plans. Svyatoslav returned to Preslav from Kiev in August 969, subduing the new Bulgarian emperor Boris II (969–971), who had recovered his capital a few months before that with Byzantine assistance. In the second campaign, Svyatoslav was wise enough to ally himself with the Pechenegs and the Magyars. From Preslav, he attacked the Byzantine territory in cooperation with those Bulgarians who had accepted his rule. That shows how ineffective the diplomacy of Nikephoros Phokas has become. The internal conflicts within the empire, in which Kalokyros had intended to get involved, have by now undermined any possible success in the military field. Nonetheless, because the Byzantine general Bardas Skleros obtained a decisive victory against the Rus' at Arkadiopolis (today Lule Burgas), 140 km to the west from Constantinople, in the spring or summer of 970. The Byzantine army of no more than 12,000 men, was most certainly outnumbered by the Rus' coalition with as many as 30,000 men, but managed to obtain the victory by means of moving an army corps to the flanks, thus encircling the enemy by surprise.[103]

At that moment, Nikephoros Phokas had already been overthrown by John Tzimiskes (969–976), a very good general, who began his reign with a truce with the Rus', as he was challenged from a different corner by Bardas Phokas's rebellion. The truce, on the other hand, left Svyatoslav unprepared for what Tzimiskes had in plan for him Tzimiskes in

[102] Leo the Deacon, IV. 6; V. 1–3 (ed. Talbot, Sullivan, 111–112, 128–132); Skylitzes, *Nikephoros II Phocas*, 20; *John Tzimiskes*, 5 (ed. Thurn, 277, 288–291; transl. Flusin, 232–233, 242; transl. Wortley, 265, 275–276); Zonaras, XVI, 27.16–18; XVII, 1.17–20 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 523–525); Stokes 1962, 467–476; Lewis 1975, 363–364; Wozniak 1984, 309–310, Fine 1991, 182–183; Barnea 1993 b, 586; Franklin, Shepard 1996, 88–89, 145–146; Busetto 1996, 12–14; Whittow 1996, 260–261; Stephenson 2000, 48–51; Curta 2006, 238. The location of Pereiaslavetz will be discussed in chapter II. 2.

[103] Leo the Deacon, VI. 8, 10–13 (ed. Talbot, Sullivan, 153, 155–161); Skylitzes, *John Tzimiskes*, 5–6 (ed. Thurn, 288–291; transl. Flusin, 242–245; transl. Wortley, 275–279); *Russian Primary Chronicle*, 87–88; Stokes 1962, 480–493; Zonaras, XVII, 1.21–26 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 525); Wozniak 1984, 310–311; Fine 1991, 183–186; Hanak 1995, 138–151; Franklin, Shepard 1996, 145–147; Busetto 1996, 15–18; Treadgold 1997, 504, 508; Krsmanović 2008, 35, 131.

the spring of 971. As soon as he finished dealing with Bardas Phokas, the Byzantine army moved rapidly through eastern Bulgaria, taking back the ports that had been lost in 917. According to Leo the Deacon, the Byzantine forces included 13,000 pedestrians and 15,000 cavalrymen. The army was commanded by the emperor himself, assisted by the *stratilates* Bardas Skleros and the *stratopedarches* Peter Phokas (who commanded troops from Thrace and Macedonia). The capital Preslav was taken from the Rus' and the Bulgarians on April 4th. The city was renamed Ioannoupolis after the emperor. The victory at Preslav was only the first step in a large offensive against the Rus', for the main body of the army headed by Svyatoslav was at that time concentrated in Dorostolon. For Svyatoslav, that city was not only a place of refuge, but also a position that allowed him to maintain control over the Danube.[104] He ignored the threat from the Byzantine navy led by *drongarios* Leo, which had already been sent to Dorostolon in late March, with the specific mission to block the fords by which the Rus' could withdraw to the north. A seal of that commander of the fleet was in fact found in Preslav,[105] a clear indication of pre-planned, joint operations. Meanwhile, the Byzantine land army, marching from Preslav toward Dorostolon, took several other fortresses, such as Pliska and Dineia.[106] A number of coin hoards were hidden during this campaign, such as that found in Razgrad.[107] Having reached Dorostolon on April 23rd, the land army laid the siege. Initially, Svyatoslav appears to have effectively defended the city and even to have launched small attacks against the Byzantine troops. However, when the Byzantine fleet showed up on April 25th, the Rus' suddenly found that their retreat routes had been blocked. Moreover, the Byzantines could now use the "Greek fire" from the ships against those on the ramparts.[108]

The Byzantine army focused on the western gate of Dorostolon (the troops in that area were under the command of Bardas Skleros), while the eastern gate was under the attack of Peter Phokas. The chronicle of John Skylitzes mentions that a delegation came to the emperor during the siege: "A delegation now came to him from Constanteia and the other

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104 Iorga 1998, 170–171.

105 Jordanov 2009, 378–379, nr. 1049.

106 Dineia has been identified with modern Vojvoda by Beševliev 1962, 72.

107 Dzanev 2007.

108 Leo the Deacon, VIII, 1–10; IX, 1–2, 6 (ed. Talbot, Sullivan, 176–188, 192–193); Skylitzes, *John Tzimiskes*, 9–11 (ed. Thurn, 295–300; transl. Flusin, 247–251; transl. Wortley, 281–286); Zonaras, XVII, 2.16–37 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 528–530); Franklin, Shepard 1996, 149; Busetto 1996, 19–26; Haldon 2001, 99–101.

fortresses established beyond the Danube. They sought an amnesty for their misdeeds [in return for] handing over themselves and the strongholds. He received them kindly, dispatching officers to take charge of the fortresses and with sufficient troops to secure them."[109] That information is missing in the minutely detailed report of Leo the Deacon, no doubt because Skylitzes culled it from a now lost source. Unlike Leo the Deacon who framed the narrative in comparison to battles of Antiquity, Skylitzes paid more attention to the details.[110] In that respect, even though he wrote at a later date, Skylitzes is a more trustworthy source than Leo the Deacon in certain respects. To be sure, he does not explain of what exactly have been guilty the garrisons of those fortresses. Asking for forgiveness from the emperor would make sense only if they had been either Byzantines, or allies disobeying orders or betraying oaths. Since it is hard to imagine the emperor being so clement, had those soldiers been his own, it is more likely that they were Bulgarians. Tzimiskes wished to be seen as a liberating Bulgaria from the Rus' occupation. He recognized Boris II as emperor (the Bulgarian ruler was captured by Svyatoslav and freed when Preslav had been conquered). In the mean time, some Bulgarians had chosen Svyatoslav's side. Such opportunists have by now started to leave the Rus' as the victorious Byzantine army was approaching.[111] That may be the context of Skylitzes' story of forts surrendering to Tzimiskes. The emperor had no reason to reject the offer of the Bulgarians who controlled those forts, but could not trust them either. For this reason he set new garrisons in those forts, as if following the advice of the military treatise of Syrianos Magister, according to which "we must not entrust the safety of these forts or assign to their garrisons men who have once been captured by the enemy."[112]

If the unnamed fortifications were located on the northern bank of the Danube, that would apply to Constanteia as well, which is absurd. This Constanteia is most certainly the same as the port mentioned by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, the ancient city of Tomis and the present-day city of Constanţa. As a consequence, some have advanced the idea that the passage contains two different sentences, which have been collapsed—one

[109] Skylitzes, *John Tzimiskes*, 12 (ed. Thurn, 301; transl. Flusin, 252; transl. Wortley, 287). See also Zonaras, XVII, 2.40–42 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 530).

[110] McGrath 1995, 157–158.

[111] Stokes 1962, 479, 486; Oikonomides 1965, 63.

[112] *Peri strateias*, 30/31. For the date and authorship of this treatise, see Rance 2007–2008, 701–737.

about Constanteia and the other about the northern fortifications.[113] There is however no evidence to support such an interpretation. Much more likely is the reading of the passage as "from Constanteia, and from other forts, [located] beyond the Danube." In other words, only the un-named forts were beyond the river. Some have proposed to locate those forts in northern Walachia (at Slon), or even in the Banat or in Transylvania,[114] as no forts are known to have existed on the northern bank of the Danube in the vicinity of Dorostolon. Since they took for granted the location of those forts in the lands north of the river Danube, others advanced solutions that ignore the political and military framework of the events. For example, Mihai Sâmpetru believed that the forts in question must have been located to the west from the mouth of the Argeş river, only because most 9th-century building materials believed to be Byzantine have been found in that area.[115] As we have seen, those archaeological remains are more likely to be associated with the Byzantine prisoners forcefully moved there by the Bulgars in 813. Since they are known to have returned to the empire in 838, their settlements could not have possibly been the same as fortresses said to been in operation in 971.

The forts must have been in the vicinity of Dorostolon, and if so, their mission was probably to prevent Pecheneg attacks. It is impossible that John Tzimiskes would have sent his soldiers at a great distance, at a time when he needed them for the siege of Dorostolon.[116] One could go as far as to interpret this as a tactical move in relation to the siege, for it would otherwise make no sense to give up on those troops at the very moment the emperor most needed them. Therefore, one would have to admit that the forts mentioned by Skylitzes could not have been too far from Dorostolon. Control over them meant a serious blow to the enemy's forces and, perhaps, an attempt to cut any possibility of withdrawal. It is obvious that Constanteia (Constanţa) served as anchorage for the Rus', in case they needed to withdraw by sea. Another way to withdraw was by the Danube, either on water or along the valley, by land. Given that the Byzantine navy was already at Dorostolon, withdrawing by water on monoxyles was not an option. Meeting in council with his leaders, Svyatoslav was aware that

[113] Stănescu 1974, 398; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1991 a, 317.

[114] Stănescu 1974, 398–399; Diaconu 1969 b, 395–396; Diaconu 1987 a, 217–218; Diaconu, Vâlceanu 1972, 15; Bica 2003, 45–46 (Spinei 2009, 100 is quite skeptical about such a remote location).

[115] Sâmpetru 1974, 256.

[116] Skylitzes, *John Tzimiskes*, 12 (ed. Thurn, 301; transl. Flusin, 252; transl. Wortley, 287).

the "Greek Fire" would prevent any Rus' attempt to flee in canoes on the Danube.[117] The only hope the Rus' could entertain was to withdraw by land to Constanteia (and then to go by sea), or to march along the Danube, the latter being obviously a longer route. That was without any doubt the reason for which Tzimiskes gladly accepted the offer to extend his control over Constanteia and other forts, the position of which could have blocked the access of the Rus to the Danube route. This is in fact another argument in favor of locating those forts in the vicinity of Dorostolon.[118]

The chronicle of Yahya-ibn-Said from Antioch (which was compiled in 1013) mentions that, after Svyatoslav's capitulation, Tzimiskes took the city (Thaisaira, an Arabicized version of Dristra, an alternative, perhaps native of Dorostolon) "and the neighboring forts previously conquered by the Russians."[119] The same appears in Skylitzes: "Once the Russians had sailed away, the emperor turned his attention to the fortresses and cities along the banks of the river and then he returned to Roman territory."[120] The Arab chronicler continues: "the emperor returned to Constantinople after he appointed commanders for these forts", which must be different from those which had surrendered before.[121] The two sources are therefore in agreement: some of the forts controlled by the Rus' surrendered willingly, while others were taken by the Byzantine army at the end of the military operations. At any rate, they were all located within the main theater of operations, either on the right, or on the left bank of the Danube. Petre Diaconu believed that the forts taken by the Byzantines after the war were all on the right bank, since in various parts of Skylitzes' chronicle, the word ὄχθας (plural of ὄχθη = "bank") is used for a single bank.[122] Nonetheless, nothing indicates that Skylitzes needed to be so specific in his terminology at this point, or anywhere else in his work.

If the fortress from the Păcuiul lui Soare island was built before the 971 war, then it could well be one of those Bulgarian strongholds in the vicinity of Dorostolon, especially since it was initially on the left bank of the river (the present branch of the Danube known as Ostrov was the

[117] Leo the Deacon, IX. 7 (ed. Talbot, Sullivan, 195).

[118] Andronic 1969, 207–215; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 73–74; Božilov 1973 b, 111–122; Franklin, Shepard 1996, 149–150; Busetto 1996, 9–32; Madgearu 1999–2000, 7–14.

[119] Yahya-ibn-Said, 833. The reference given by Oikonomides 1965, 63, footnote 25 and uncritically reproduced after him by Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 74 is wrong.

[120] Skylitzes, *John Tzimiskes*, 18 (ed. Thurn, 310; transl. Flusin, 258; transl. Wortley, 293–294).

[121] Not the same, as Božilov 2008, 93 thinks.

[122] Diaconu 1969 a, 43–44.

main stream of the river at that time). The landscape around Păcuiul lui Soare has changed considerably since the Middle Ages, and it is quite possible that some other forts existed on the left bank, which have meanwhile been flooded.[123] However, the excavator of Păcuiul lui Soare, Petre Diaconu, has demonstrated that the first phase of the fort is to be dated just after the siege of Dorostolon in 971.[124] The problem of this fort's chronology will be discussed in further detail in chapter III. 1.

If there were any Bulgarian forts on the northern bank of the Danube in the vicinity of Dorostolon, then those forts must have been part of the defense system built against the Magyars and the Pechenegs, to which belonged a number of fortifications on the southern bank, such Oltina, Rasova and Cochirleni-"Cetatea Pătulului"—all dated between the 9th and the 10th century on the basis of the fine Gray Ware of the Dridu B type found inside each one of them. The fort at Cochirleni, located at 100 m from the western end of the Great Earthen Dike, has ramparts made of stones and mortar, enclosing an area of 3 ha. The fort near Rasova was built in the same technique, with a 4 m wide rampart. No excavations have been carried so far in any of them.[125] The excavations in Oltina (a fortress located 35 km downstream from Dorostolon, near Satu Nou, at a place called "Capul Dealului") suggest that that fort, which was erected on a 12 ha-large promontory defended by a single earthen rampart, was built in the 9th century, as demonstrated by a coin struck for Emperor Theophilos (830–842) and found on the site.[126] Everything points therefore to a system of forts defending the axis of the Danube downstream (i.e., to the east and northeast) from Dorostolon, on the southern bank, since the 9th century. Those are most likely the forts mentioned by Skylitzes and Yahya-ibn-Said.

The last attempt to break the siege of Dorostolon was decided on July 20th, 971 by Svyatoslav in a council with his chieftains, but ultimately failed. Leo the Deacon mentions that the council in question was called κομέντον in the language of the Rus'.[127] This, however, is a word of Latin origin, from which the Romanian word for "word" (*cuvânt*) derives. Nikolaos Oikonomides remarked that Leo the Deacon had found the word

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123 Vâlceanu 1967, 593–615.

124 See especially Diaconu 1969 b, 395–400; Diaconu 1988 a, 181–183. For other opinions on the chronology of the naval base in Păcuiul lui Soare, see chapter III. 1.

125 Diaconu 1973–1975, 200–203; Florescu 1986, 173; P. Diaconu, *Cochirleni*, in EAIVR, I, 324.

126 Custurea 2000–2001, 589–590; Chiriac, Custurea 2002, 222.

127 Leo the Deacon, IX. 7 (ed. Talbot, Sullivan, 194).

in a military report going back to information collected from spies who spoke Romanian, and was thus misled into believing that the word was Rus'. This in fact is a valuable piece of information about the presence of Romanians (or at least speakers of Romanian) in the area, and of their use for collecting intelligence for the Byzantine army. Incidentally, the same word (κομέντον) is used by Skylitzes in reference to a council of the Pecheneg chieftains during the events of 1048–1049. Some believe that the word is Pecheneg.[128] Pavel Georgiev attempted to to reject Oikonomides' interpretation by arguing that the word was borrowed by the Rus' from the Bulgarians, who in turn took it from the Greek language (in which the word must have been *komventon*).[129] While this theory seems to hold water at the first glance, Georgiev ignores the fact that the word in question had already disappeared from the Greek language, at the time the Bulgarians were supposed to have borrowed it. That, in fact, was the reason for which Oikonomides proposed its transmission via Romanian. A military treatise composed under Emperor Basil II insists that "actual spies, however, are the most useful. They go into the enemy's country and can find out exactly what is going on there and report it all back to those who sent them. The domestic and the generals along the border should be sure to have spies not only among the Bulgarians but also among all the other neighboring peoples, for example, in Patzinakia, in Turkey [the land of the Hungarians], in Russia, so that none of their plans will not be known to us."[130]

After much fighting, overwhelmed by both land and naval forces that had blocked the city, Svyatoslav finally surrendered on July 24th, 971, and agreed to enter a peace treaty with John Tzimiskes. The Rus' promise to withdraw from Bulgaria under the supervision of the Byzantine navy.[131] Following his victory, John Tzimiskes sent envoys to the Pechenegs, asking for an alliance to prevent any further Rus' attacks on the newly conquered Bulgaria. Svyatoslav was in fact killed by the Pechenegs in an ambush near

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[128] Oikonomides 1987, 187–190.

[129] Georgiev 1988, 87–92.

[130] *Anonymous Book on Tactics*, 292/293.

[131] Leo the Deacon, IX. 8–11 (ed. Talbot, Sullivan, 196–200); Skylitzes, *John Tzimiskes*, 14–18 (ed. Thurn, 304–310; transl. Flusin, 254–258; transl. Wortley, 289–293); *Russian Primary Chronicle*, 89–90; Zonaras, XVII, 3.19–22 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 535); Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 73; Fine 1991, 187; Franklin, Shepard 1996, 149–150; Busetto 1996, 27–28; Stephenson 2000, 53; Haldon 2001, 101–104.

the Dnieper cataracts on his way back to Kiev.[132] Meanwhile, Boris II was taken to Constantinople where the emperor "took off the royal insignia (they were a tiara with purple border, studded with gold and pearls, and a purple robe and scarlet boots), and honored him [Boris II] with the rank of *magistros*."[133] This was the final act of the long battle for restoring the Byzantine power over what Leo the Deacon called Mysia, the formerly Roman province which had falled under the barbarian Bulgars after Emperor Constantine IV's failed expedition against them. The immediate consequence of the 971 war was the disappearance of the Bulgarian state. The main chronicler of the events, Leo the Deacon, in fact treated Tzimiskes's campaign as a reintegration of "Mysia" into the empire (he must have used that archaic name for the land in order to emphasize that that was a Roman province recovered from the barbarians).[134] Indeed, the territories gained by the Byzantine Empire were quite extensive. Besides the region between the Danube and the Stara Planina, the part of Thrace previously within Bulgarian borders was now included into the duchy of Adrianople. The western boundary of the newly conquered lands along the Danube was probably the valley of the Iskar river.[135] Most troops were in fact stationed near the Danube and in northeastern Bulgaria, since that was the direction from which further Rus' attacks were expected.[136]

The military organization established by John Tzimiskes is reflected in a list of offices known as the *Taktikon Scorialensis*, which was dated to 975, published, and studied by Nikolaos Oikonomides.[137] That text includes data on otherwise unknown military and administrative units, the existence of some of which has been later confirmed by means of lead seal finds. The theme of Ioannoupolis was created in northeastern Bulgaria, and placed under the command of a *strategos* of Thrace and Ioannoupolis residing in Preslav, the name of which, as we have seen, had been changed into Ioannoupolis. Another *strategos*, according to the *Taktikon Scorialensis*, resided in Dristra.[138] This is in fact the the first source to

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132 Skylitzes, *John Tzimiskes*, 18 (ed. Thurn, 310; transl. Flusin, 259; transl. Wortley, 294); *Russian Primary Chronicle*, 90; Zonaras, XVII, 3.22–23; 4.5 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 535, 536); Tăpkova-Zaimova 1973, 91; Pritsak 1975, 232; Stephenson 2000, 53; Malamut 1995, 116; Spinei 2006, 176.

133 Skylitzes, *John Tzimiskes*, 18 (ed. Thurn, 310; transl. Flusin, 258–259; transl. Wortley, 294). See also Leo the Deacon, IX. 12 (ed. Talbot, Sullivan, 201).

134 Brezeanu 1991, 112.

135 Tăpkova-Zaimova 1975 a, 113–115.

136 Haldon 1999, 64.

137 Oikonomides 1965, 57–60; Oikonomides 1972, 255–277.

138 Oikonomides 1972, 264/265, 268/269.

mention the new name of the city previously known as Dorostolon. The name *Dristra* is most likely modeled after the Bulgarian name *Drăstăr*,[139] which suggests that the Byzantine administration was making efforts to win over its new subjects. However, the Bulgarian form of the name had been familiar to the Byzantines since the late 9th century. In the so-called *Chronicle of Monemvasia*, a confused tradition about the Avars maintains that they were received by Justinian in "Dorostolon, called today Dristra" (Δωροστόλῳ, τῇ νῦν καλουμένῃ Δρίστρᾳ).[140] The Bulgarian name of the town, *Drăstăr*, seems to have its origins in a person's name—*Dristros*, a Bulgarian count known from the reign of Symeon.[141]

In his account of the battle of Dorostolon, Leo the Deacon claims that Emperor John Tzimiskes changed the name of the city into Theodoroupolis to honor a miracle by Saint Theodore Stratilates, which had helped the Byzantine army during the siege.[142] That information does not appear in other sources and it is even contradicted by the mention of the name *Dristra* in the *Taktikon Scorialensis* and in the inscriptions of several lead seals dated to that same period. Nonetheless, the name change from Dorostolon to Theodoroupolis has by now been accepted by some historians.[143] Four seals from Preslav belonging to a man named Sisinios, *protospatharios* and *katepano* of Theodoroupolis, confirmed that opinion.[144] Ivan Jordanov initially believed that no less than three themes have been established in 971: Dorostolon, Thrace and Ioannoupolis, and Theodoroupolis. According to him, the latter was located north of the Danube and in the northern part of Dobrudja.[145] Later, Jordanov changed his position and claimed that Theodoroupolis was in fact not Dorostolon, but Presthlavitza or Little Preslav[146] (the location of which will be discussed in chapter II. 2). Petre Diaconu, following Nikolaos Oikonomides, was of a different opinion: Sisinios was the commander of a *tagma* recruited from Euchaita, a city in Paphlagonia (now Avhat, in Turkey) which was famous for the relics of Saint Theodore Stratilates. Moreover, the metropolitan of Euchaita was

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139 Mutafčiev 1932, 193–194.

140 Kislinger 2001, 199.

141 Mutafčiev 1932, 195; Beševliev 1963, 218, nr. 46.

142 Leo the Deacon, IX, 9, 12 (ed. Talbot, Sullivan, 197, 200).

143 Bănescu 1946, 68; Stănescu 1974, 397; Kuzev 1979, 34; Kuzev, Gjuzelev 1981, 184; Wasilewski 1995, 190, 200; Soustal 1997, 120.

144 Jordanov 1982 a, 20–21; Jordanov 1993, 124–125, nr. 228–231; Jordanov 2003 a, 88–89, nr. 33.1; Krsmanović 2008, 139; Jordanov 2009, 426, nr. 1208–1211.

145 Jordanov 1982 a, 12–23.

146 Jordanov 1987 b, 200–201; Jordanov, Tăpkova-Zaimova 1988, 120; Jordanov 1993, 124–125, nr. 228–231; Tăpkova-Zaimova 1993, 96. See also Stephenson 2000, 53.

at Dorostolon with the Byzantine army. Thus, Leo the Deacon must have mistaken Dorostolon for the city of Euchaita, about which Skylitzes knew that it had received the new name Theodoroupolis in honor of the victory of 971, attributed to the assistance of the military saint.[147]

Oikonomides offered a third solution: Dorostolon was indeed called Theodoroupolis, but only for a short time. Sisinios must have been the first governor of that province, and he had the rank of *katepano*. Dristra was the new name introduced for the city and for the theme at some point before 975 (the date of the *Taktikon Scorialensis*), probably at the same time as Euchaita was renamed Theodoroupolis in honor of the local saint, who had contributed to the victory of Dorostolon.[148] After a while, the rank of the commander residing in Dorostolon/Dristra was lowered from *katepano* to *strategos*. That was the situation captured in the *Taktikon Scorialiensis*, ca. 975.

Oikonomides placed in the same region of the Lower Danube another province mentioned in *Taktikon Scorialensis*—"*Western* Mesopotamia", ruled by a *katepano* who had a *strategos* under his orders. The *katepano* of Mesopotamia was not called "from the west", but the existence of a duke of Mesopotamia (an equivalent function)[149] led Oikonomides to the conclusion associate that the *katepano* was of Western Mesopotamia.[150] One should note the high rank reserved for the *katepano* of Western Mesopotamia in this list of offices, namely immediately after the dukes of the eastern provinces.[151] The dukes or *katepanoi* recorded in the list were commanders of provinces—Antioch (duke), Mesopotamia (duke), Chaldia (duke), Western Mesopotamia (*katepano*), Italy (*katepano*), Thessaloniki (duke), Adrianople (duke). Oikonomides believed that Western Mesopotamia was the same as Atelkuz (a Hungarian word with the same meaning, namely "between rivers").[152] This, however, would imply that John Tzimiskes took over southern Moldavia as well. Oikonomides' interpretation was adopted by others,[153] but there is no proof for such an

147 Oikonomides 1986 a, 327–335; Diaconu 1986, 170–171; Diaconu 1987 c, 483–484.

148 Oikonomides 1998, 586–587. Jordanov 2003 a, 88–89 agreed with this.

149 For the synonymy see Cheynet 1985, 181; Kühn 1991, 158–168; Krsmanović 2008, 78. Only Wasilewski 1975, 644 claimed that the dukes were commanders of mercenaries, while *katepanoi* were commanders of *stratiotai*, the soldiers who owed military service in exchange for land property.

150 Oikonomides 1965, 57–60, 73–74; Oikonomides 1972, 262/263, 268/269.

151 Kühn 1991, 221.

152 Oikonomides 1965, 68–72.

153 Andronic 1969, 211; Božilov 1976, 19–32; Diaconu 1970, 24–25; Diaconu 1987 a, 218–219; Makk 2002, 273–281; Holmes 2005, 398; Božilov 2008, 94; Krsmanović 2008, 133. Some

extension of Byzantine power north of the river Danube in 971. Tzimiskes had neither the necessary forces, nor indeed the need to occupy such a distant territory, the security of which was better left to the allied Pechenegs, who were the enemies of the Rus'. He definitely had more important problems in the East, where the war with the Arabs was resumed in 972.[154] True, copper coins (*folles*) struck for John Tzimiskes and Basil II have been found in Walachia, but such finds could hardly indicate a military occupation, as similar coins are also known from northern Moldavia, the Banat and Hungary—all regions that were most certainly not occupied by the Byzantines.[155] Those coins are rather an indication of trade relations. On the other hand, it is quite obvious that the single, most important goal of the 971 campaign was the defeat of Svyatoslav. The occupation of a larger area north of the river Danube, or even of bridgeheads, was pointless, for it could have meant only a waste of precious military resources.

Oikonomides returned to the problem of the Western Mesopotamia *katepanate* in one of his latest studies, without changing his position on the location of that administrative unit in the region of the Danube Delta, or on the left bank of the river. He also maintained that that province did not survive the Bulgarian offensive of 986.[156] The discovery in Preslav of the seals of one Damian Dobromir, *patrikios* and *anthypatos*, duke of Thrace and Mesopotamia, changed the terms of the equation.[157] The unified command over the provinces Thrace and Mesopotamia concerned in fact troops under the command of Damian Dobromir.[158] That person is the same as Dobromir, the commander of the Bulgarian fortress of Berhoia (Veria) in Macedonia, who went to the Byzantine side in 1001, after which he received the title of *anthypatos* (according to an interpolation into the chronicle of Skylitzes, he was married to a niece of Emperor Samuel).[159]

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researchers accepted only the existence of the strategy of Western Mesopotamia, the katepanate being located in the east (Tăpkova-Zaimova 1973, 95–96; Wasilewski 1975, 641; Tăpkova-Zaimova 1993, 96; Wasilewski 1995, 198–200; Madgearu 1999 a, 421–422; Madgearu 1999–2000, 5–7, 16; Stephenson 2000, 56). I have given up that interpretation as it was not possible to have both a duke and a *katepano* at the same time within the same eastern Mesopotamia.

154 Ostrogorsky 1956, 321; Treadgold 1997, 511.

155 See the gazetteer in Custurea 2000, 185–199.

156 Oikonomides 1998, 584–585.

157 Jordanov 1984, 99–105; Jordanov, Tăpkova-Zaimova 1988, 120; Jordanov 1993, 127–128, nr. 237–238; Jordanov 2003 a, 98–99; Jordanov 2006, 130–131, nr. 168–169; Seibt 2008, 104; Jordanov 2009, 435–436, nr. 1248–1249.

158 Oikonomides 1998, 583–584.

159 Skylitzes, *Basil II and Constantine*, 27 (ed. Thurn, 344; transl. Flusin, 287; transl. Wortley, 326); Zonaras, XVII, 8.10 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 559).

It is even possible that Damian Dobromir was of Vlach origin, since it is quite unlikely for a Bulgarian to have received that office in the midst of the conflict with Bulgaria.[160] Members of the Bulgarian aristocracy who submitted to the Byzantine authority were bestowed titles and office away from the Balkans, in the distant provinces of the East. Oikonomides, who believed Damian Dobromir to have been a Bulgarian, rejected the idea that he could have been appointed a duke at the time when the Bulgarians were still fighting the Byzantine army. Instead, according to Oikonomides, Damian Dobromir was invested with that office soon after 971. Oikonomides does not seem to have realized that this Damian Dobromir was the same person as that mentioned by Skylitzes for the year 1001. I first advanced that identification in 1999, and Stepan Nikolov reached the same conclusion independently.[161] In short, this would make Damian Dobromir the commander of the joint forces from the themes Thrace and Mesopotamia, which were sent to the Danube in 1000 or shortly after that. The office of duke was equivalent to *katepano*. Another officer from that province was Leo, *imperial spatharocandidate and turmarches* of Mesopotamia, known from three lead seals discovered in Silistra and dated to the 10th century.[162] Given the place of their discovery, Leo was probably the governor of western Mesopotamia.

The location of Western Mesopotamia in the northern part of Dobrudja, between the Danube, the Black Sea and the Carasu valley, is now accepted by most scholars,[163] who agree that the name referred to that position "between rivers." According to another opinion, Western Mesopotamia included the strategies of Dristra and Ioannoupolis, which were separated after 975.[164] However, Werner Seibt has brought to attention two lead seals

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[160] As I sustained in Madgearu 1999–2000, 18.

[161] Madgearu 1999 a, 422; Madgearu 1999–2000, 18; Nikolov 2001, 146. See also Curta 2006, 244. Jordanov 1984, Oikonomides 1998, 585, Stephenson 2000, 67, 77 and Strässle 2006, 161, 328 did not notice the identity between Dobromir from Veria and Damian Dobromir. More recently, Krsmanović 2008, 137–138, 144, while citing my study, advanced the idea that the Bulgarian nobleman was appointed duke of Western Mesopotamia soon after 971, after which he joined Samuel, before turning again to the Byzantine side in 1001.

[162] Jordanov 2003 a, 125–126, nr. 48.4; Jordanov 2006–2007, 521; Jordanov, Žekova 2007, 119, nr. 311; Jordanov 2008, 42–43, nr. 9–10; Seibt 2008, 104; Jordanov 2009, 458–459, nr. 1353–1355.

[163] Andronic 1969, 211; Tăpkova-Zaimova 1973, 95–96; Stănescu 1974, 399; Shepard 1985, 253; Diaconu 1986, 167–173; Kühn 1991, 221–222; Tăpkova-Zaimova 1993, 96; Madgearu 1999–2000, 5–12; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 92; Tăpkova-Zaimova, Stoimenov 2004, 342–345; Jordanov 2005, 263–272; Mărculeţ 2006, 295–319; Strässle 2006, 222; Yotov 2007, 322; Božilov 2008, 94; Spinei 2009, 101.

[164] Mărculeţ 2005, 28–35; Mărculeţ 2006, 297–298, 316.

of *strategoi* of Mesopotamia, which were in Izvorovo and Simeonovgrad (southern Bulgaria),[165] and dated to the 9th century, before the recovery of eastern Mesopotamia, the province between the Tigris and the Euphrates. According to Seibt, a new province of Mesopotamia was established in the early 9th century somewhere between Adrianople and Thessaloniki, in an area to which settlers from Mesopotamia have been brought.[166] If Seibt is right, then also Damian Dobromir should also be placed in Macedonia, near Thrace, the other theme which provided troops under his command. A similar point of view had been advanced some time ago by Alexandru Bolşacov-Ghimpu, but his idea remained unknown to Seibt.[167]

In my opinion, the 9th-century seals from southern Bulgaria are an incontrovertible evidence of a theme named Mesopotamia established in southern Thrace at a time when the Byzantine-Bulgar frontier ran along the line Develtos—Agathonike (Orjakhovo)—Constantia (Simeonovgrad)—Hebros (Maritsa) river, as established by the treaty of 816. This area had a great importance for the forward defense of Constantinople.[168] The absence of any information for the subsequent period strongly suggests that the theme had a very short life. On the other hand, locating the katepanate of Western Mesopotamia in southern Thrace soon after 971 made no sense whatsoever from a strategic point of view, since nothing threatened that region after the disappearance of Bulgaria. By contrast, such a military and administrative unit was imperiously necessary near the Danube frontier, which was threatened by the Rus', or at least perceived to be so. For this reason, I am inclined to believe that Western Mesopotamia mentioned in the *Taktikon Scorialensis* was in fact in northern Dobrudja, its southern border being marked by the Stone Dike. Damian Dobromir and Leo were commanders in that theme, and not of the theme in southern Thrace, which had by then disappeared. They both resided probably in Noviodunum-Isaccea, the most important center of northern Dobrudja, where several seals dated after 971 have been found. As for the residence of the *strategos* under the orders of the *katepano* of Western Mesopotamia, he must have been only the commander of a fortress from that province.[169] Constanteia seems to be the best candidate for that position, because the metropolitanate of Tomis was revived exactly at that

[165] Jordanov 2003 a, 124, 125, nr. 48. 1, 3.
[166] Seibt 2008, 103–108.
[167] Bolşacov-Ghimpu 1973, 559.
[168] Beševliev 1981, 190–206; Gagova 1986, 70–72; Dimitrov 1992 b, 43–45.
[169] Stephenson 2000, 56; Krsmanović 2010, 608.

the same time.[170] The primary goal of the katepanate of Western Mesopotamia was the defense against future Rus' maritime attacks. Therefore, the first structure created in 971 by John Tzimiskes in the Danube region consisted of the katepanate of Western Mesopotamia (centered perhaps at Noviodunum), the katepanate of Dristra (later turned into a strategy), and the strategy of Ioannoupolis-Preslav (see Fig. 2).

After 975, the area dominated by the Byzantine Empire along the Danube extended farther to the west, as a strategy of Morava was established, which is documented by the lead seal of Adralestos Diogenes, imperial *protospatharios* and *strategos* of Morava. Morava, in this case, is the town Moravon (modern Dubravica) located at the mouth of river by that same name. Because this man was active during the reign of John Tzimiskes, it could be inferred that he was appointed shortly after 976. The strategy of Morava is not mentioned in the *Taktikon Scorialensis*, written before 975.[171] It is not excluded that the advance toward the Morava was made from the south, namely from Dyrrachion—and important position of the empire in the western Balkans until 997. One indication of a southern direction is the ephemeral existence of a katepanate of Ras (near Novi Pazar), which is documented by the seal of John, *protospatharios* and *katepano* of Ras, dated to that same period. According to a tradition preserved in the so-called *Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja*, the Byzantine army occupied Raška shortly after the conquest of Bulgaria, but the local *župan* regained his independence after Tzimiskes' death.[172] Because the authenticity of that source was recently contested with strong arguments,[173] a Byzantine conquest of Ras in the aftermath of the conquest of Bulgaria remains to be proven. If the information in the chronicle is to be trusted at all, the katepanate of Ras must have existed for a short while after 971. The strategy of Morava belonged to that katepanate which had no common border with the theme of Dristra.

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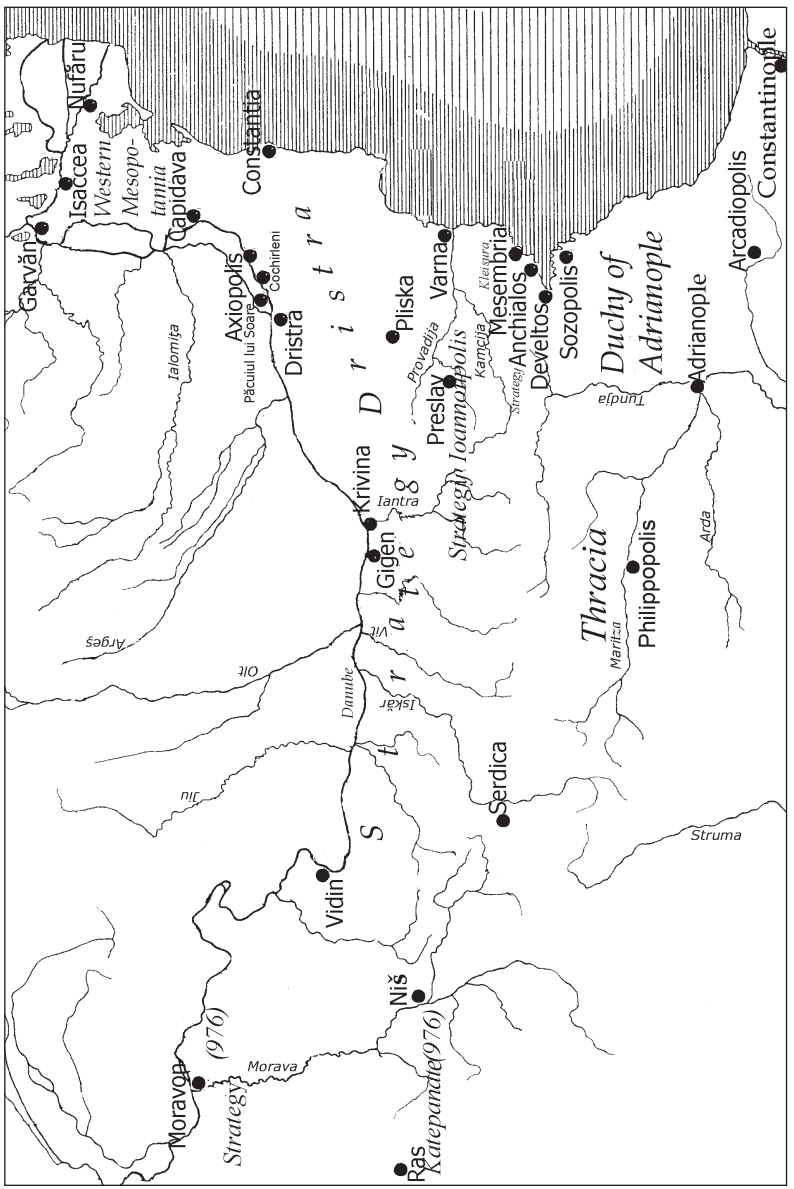
[170] Madgearu 1999–2000, 16; Madgearu 2001, 75–76. Tăpkova-Zaimova 1973, 96 supposed that the residence of the *strategos* was at Păcuiul lui Soare, but this interpretation could not be admitted if the katepanate included only the northern part of present Romanian Dobrudja. Kostova 2008 a, 217 considers that the residence of the strategy was either at Constanţa, either at Presthlavitza.

[171] Nesbitt, Oikonomides 1991, 195–196; Pirivatrić 1997, 173–201; Oikonomides 1998, 589; Krsmanović 2008, 135, 141. For the archaeological discoveries see chapter II. 3.

[172] Ferluga 1980, 437–438; Nesbitt, Oikonomides 1991, 100–101; Krsmanović 2008, 82, 135, 141, 143.

[173] Bujan 2008, 5–38.



2. The military organization between 971 and 986

Soon after the conquest of 971, another strategy was established at Anchialos (the lead seal of its *strategos* Anastasios may be dated in the last decades of the 10th century).[174] In Mesembria, the old *kleisura* was revived, which had been created after 864, and then lost to Bulgaria in 917. The analysis of the iconography of the seals of two *kleisurarchoi*, Alexios and Pankratios, discovered at Preslav, indicates a date in the last decades in the 10th century. A same dating may be accepted for could the seal of the *strategos* Nikolaos of Mesembria.[175] The *strategoi* of Anchialos and the *kleisurarchoi* of Mesembria were perhaps under the orders of the duke of Adrianople. Much like in the mid-9th century, the Rus' threat was the primary reason for those new developments in the defense on the western coast of the Black Sea. The strategic purpose of the new Danube theme was to prevent or to deter future Rus' attacks. The same mission had Crimea, where a new office, the *strategos* of the Cimmerian Bosphorus (Kerč Straits) was established soon after 971. It appears that that port city had been conquered by Svyatoslav from the Khazars in 965, and then by Byzantines after the victory of 971.[176] The need for a better defense against the Rus' led to the creation in the same period of yet another office, the *strategos* of Pontos Euxinos.[177]

A major change took place in Byzantine-Rus' political and military relations during the reign of Basil II (976–1025). The emperor sought military support from the new prince Vladimir (980–1015) during the civil war he waged against the general Bardas Phokas. After his baptism, Vladimir married Anna, Basil II's sister. The Rus' ruler sent in the spring of 988 6,000 elite Varangian warriors who had a decisive contribution in the victorious battles of Chrysopolis and Abydos. In 989, the Rus' attacked Cherson, as that city was under the control of a commander allied with the rebel Bardas Phokas. They came down on the Don River and then by the Black Sea, and laid a siege of the city which lasted several months. Encircled by the Rus' army and betrayed from the inside, Cherson surrendered to the Rus' in 990, but Vladimir gave it back to his brother-in-law as a marriage gift.[178] Thus the Byzantine-Rus' relations entered a relatively long

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174 Nesbitt, Oikonomides 1991, 168–169, nr. 73.1.

175 Oikonomides 2002, 7. The seals are published by Jordanov 2003 a, 119–120, 47.1, 47.4; Jordanov 2009, 454–455, nr. 1340, 1343–1345.

176 Oikonomides 1972, 269, 363.

177 Oikonomides 1972, 266/267, 358; Kostova 2006, 582. The seal of Michael, *strategos* of Pontos Euxinos dated to the mid-11th century, in Jordanov 2009, 425, nr. 1207.

178 Poppe 1976, 195–244; Franklin, Shepard 1996, 162–163; Holmes 2005, 460, 510–511; Krsmanović 2008, 51.

period of peace, interrupted in 1043 by a renewed Rus' attack (discussed in chapter III. 2).

For the moment, however, the danger from the north has been removed, and even the Pechenegs were at peace. The situation on the Danube frontier was again destabilized, however, by the revived Bulgarian state. The four sons (*comitopuloi*) of the Bulgarian count Nikola from Macedonia—Samuel, Aaron, David and Moses—started in 976 a rebellion against the Byzantines. Some historians date the revolt of the Comitopouloi at an earlier date (969) and regard it as a centrifugal movement against the Bulgarian emperor Boris II, in the circumstances surrounding the Rus'-Byzantine war. True, both Skylitzes and Zonaras placed the *apostasias* of the four brothers at the beginning of Boris II's reign. The same scholars also maintain that the presence of Bulgarian envoys at the court of Otto I (936–973) in Quedlinburg in the spring of 973 suggests that some kind of Bulgarian state had survived the Byzantine onslaught, and that state must have by then been restricted to Macedonia.[179] However, it has been noted that only the German emperor's vassals were present in Quedlinburg, which would imply a more westerly location for the lands from which the Bulgarian envoys had come, perhaps around Sirmium, a city which was conquered by the Byzantine army only at the end of the conflict with Bulgaria, in 1018.[180] Indeed, Bulgarian Macedonia was not occupied before that by the Byzantine forces, and the collapse of the Bulgarian state in 968–969 must have offered a good opportunity for centrifugal actions in that remote area, against the central power of Preslav.[181] The problem remains open.

Samuel became the leader of the resistance against the Byzantines. He established a state, the military power of which was based on that part of Macedonia which remained un-occupied by John Tzimiskes. From that region, he launched a series of attacks on the Byzantines, taking advantage of the civil war between Emperor Basil II and the general Bardas Skleros (976–979). Between 976 and 986, the Bulgarians in Macedonia obtained several major victories against the Byzantine army, the most important being that of Serdica (Sofia), on August 17th, 986. Samuel became emperor

[179] Skylitzes, *Basil II and Constantine*, chapter 13, 5; chapter 16, 11 (ed. Thurn, 255–256, 328; transl. Flusin, 216, 275; transl. Wortley, 246, 312); Zonaras, XVI, 23.32–34; XVII, 6. 2–5 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 495, 547); Stokes 1962, 483; Antoljak 1972, 379–384; Döpmann 1983, 47, 50. *Contra*: Anastasijević 1930, 20–36; Stănescu 1968 a, 409–412; Ferluga 1976, 345–354.

[180] Ljubinković 1973, 949–950; Popović 1978, 36–39.

[181] Fine 1991, 188–189; Nikolov 2001, 142.

of Bulgaria in 997 because Romanos, the brother of the former emperor Boris II was ineligible, since he had been castrated.[182] It was in fact a new state developed around Ochrid, which now became the see of the Bulgarian Patriarch. It is worth insisting that this was a Bulgarian, not a Macedonian state, as some historians from the Republic of Macedonia wrongly assume.[183]

Over the first ten years, Samuel fought the Byzantines mostly in the central, western and southern parts of Bulgaria. The Danube region does not seem to have been a matter of concern for him at that time, because, being a good strategist, he realized that victory depended on the concentration of forces in naturally defended regions. In his work of 982, an anonymous Persian geographer made a distinction between *Burjan*, a province with a district (*shahr*) called Thrace, paying land-taxes to the king of *Rum*, and *Bulghari*, a people living on the mountains to the northwest of the empire, perpetually at war with the Byzantines.[184] The latter were most likely Samuel's subjects, as Samuel had not yet taken control of the lowlands. He did launch attacks to the north in the direction of the Danube region, but only after his power was firmly settled in Macedonia and in the mountainous part of Bulgaria. In the course of several offensives, Samuel managed to conquer a large part of the Byzantine territories in the northern and central Balkans, taking advantage of the internal conflict within the empire, as well as of the Byzantine wars with the Arabs. The expansion of Samuel's state towards the Danube began in 986, after the conquest of Serdica and the subsequent battle of the Trojan Gorge, where the Byzantine army led by general Stephen Kontostephanos, the *domestikos* of the western *scholai* (commander of the army in the Balkan Peninsula) suffered a serious defeat on August 17th, 986.[185] Because there no seal among those found in the administrative building in Preslav (see next chapter) could be dated between 986 and 1000, it has been suggested that the Byzantine rule over that city was interrupted during that period. This means that Preslav was conquered by Samuel in 986, most probably

[182] Fine 1991, 192–195; Stephenson 2000, 59–63.

[183] For the propaganda value of this interpretation linked directly to the historical legitimization of the present state, a successor of former Yugoslavia, see Fine 1991, 191; Madgearu 2008, 181–185.

[184] Hudud al-'Alam, 42 (ed. Minorsky, 157–158).

[185] Skylitzes, *Basil II and Constantine*, 12 (ed. Thurn, 330–331; transl. Flusin, 276–277; transl. Wortley, 313–314); Leo the Deacon, X. 8 (ed. Talbot, Sullivan, 213–215); Tăpkova-Zaimova 1973, 100; Fine 1991, 192; Holmes 2005, 490–492; Strässle 2006, 274; Yotov 2008 a, 350; Krsmanović 2008, 50, 147.

soon after the victory in the Trojan mountain pass. During this campaign two messages from Stephen Kontostephanos were sent at Preslav. Kontostephanos' predecessor for the years 976–985, Leo Melissenos, was also in correspondence with the strategy of Preslav.[186] It has been suggested that Preslav remained under Byzantine control even after 986 because there were too many *strategoi* of Ioannoupolis for the years 971–986,[187] but nothing substantiates that suggestion. There is no reason to question the possibility of five *strategoi* in succession over a 16-year long period (for which see chapter II). Although he conquered the old capital, Samuel continued to rule from Ochrid, which had a a better defense.

The Byzantine push into the Middle Danube region through the creation of a strategy of Morava must have caused a rapprochement between the Hungarian duke Geza and Samuel, which took the form of a dynastic alliance. In or around 995, Geza offered one of his daughters in marriage to Gabriel, Samuel's son and heir apparent (according to Skylitzes, Gabriel's mother was a woman from Larissa). The marriage with the Hungarian princess was however abandoned around 997, when Gabriel took as wife a woman from Larissa, named Irene.[188] At that moment, the strategy of Morava had disappeared, most probably because of Samuel's northern offensive of 986. In that same year, some troops were transferred from the Danube region to other provinces, which were under greater threats. At Dinogetia, the barracks of the soldiers in the garrison installed there soon after 971 were abandoned after a very short time, being replaced by civilian dwellings.[189] Northern Dobrudja (the katepanate of Western Mesopotamia) remained under Byzantine control after 986. A seal found in Isaccea shows that the port was in operation after 986. The seal belonged to David Kouropalates,[190] the Armenian prince of Tayk who received the

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[186] Jordanov, Tăpkova-Zaimova 1988, 121; Diaconu 1989, 11–14; Tăpkova-Zaimova 1993, 97; Jordanov 1993, 88–90, nr. 159–162; Jordanov 2006, 287–289, nr. 459–461; Strässle 2006, 406–407; Jordanov, Žekova 2007, 103–104, nr. 266, 267; Krsmanović 2008, 57–59; Jordanov 2009, 361–362, nr. 992–996. Leo Melissenos is not mentioned in the list of Kühn 1991, 153.

[187] Frankopan 2001, 87–88.

[188] Skylitzes, *Basil II and Constantine*, 35 (ed. Thurn, 349; transl. Flusin, 292; transl. Wortley, 332; Prokić 1906, 31, 36, 43, 52; Moravcsik 1970, 62; Fine 1991, 195–196; Makk 1994 a, 27; Strässle 2006, 158, 333; Révész 2009, 83. Gabriel was also called Radomir or Romanos. According to Iorga 1937, 10 and Risos 1990, 206–207 (accepted by Strässle 2006), the name *Romanos* indicates that his mother from Larissa was of Vlach origin. This, in turn, would supposedly be the first attestation of the ethnic name Romanians gave to themselves.

[189] Diaconu 1969 a, 48–49; Tăpkova-Zaimova 1973, 101.

[190] Barnea 1993 a, 56–57.

title of *kouropalates* in 990 and who died in 1000.[191] Since he was a high official in the Byzantine army, his message was obviously addressed to a local commander. A coin hoard of 49 *nomismata* in which the latest coins have been struck between 977 and 989 was buried in Greci, 17 km south of Garvăn, most likely in the circumstances of the war against Samuel.[192]

The Stone Dike became again useful for Bulgaria as the northern part of Dobrudja remained under Byzantine control. The defense required reparations and a military presence along that frontier. It appears that that the mission entrusted to *župan* Demetrius at some point between 986 and 1000, as attested by the inscription from Mircea Vodă. The situation in Dristra after 986 is far from clear. Although the Stone Dike most certainly was the frontier of Bulgaria after 986, some historians believe that Dristra remained under Byzantine control, because the historical narrative about the offensive of 1000 makes no mention of that city.[193] The current state of research does not allow any conclusive answer to this question, but it is more likely that Dristra was taken over by the Bulgarians in 986 or soon after that. The city was too important to be left aside after the victorious campaign of Samuel. A proof of the Bulgarian rule over the city is the existence of a workshop producing cast Bulgarian imitatations of Byzantine coins, namely *folles* of types A1 and A2.[194]

An older generation of historians brought the period of Bulgarian revival in association with a controversial source. In 1819, the French Byzantinist of German origin Charles B. Hase published three notes in the appendix of his edition of the Leo the Deacon's *Chronicle*, which dealt with the life of a Byzantine commander of a fort called *Klimata*, supposedly threatened by un-named northern barbarians. The commander is said to have been compelled to seek assistance against those enemies from a powerful ruler called *basileos*, who lived somewhere in the north. Following Hase, historians called this text "The Note of the Gothic Toparch", "The Note of the Greek Toparch", or "Hase's Anonymous." Nobody had seen the manuscript after which Hase published his edition. The very confusing information in

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191 Grousset 1947, 506, 512, 530; Grünbart 1998, 29.

192 Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 23; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1996, 281; Poenaru-Bordea, Ocheşeanu, Popeea 2004, 130–134; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2010 d, 444; Custurea, Talmaţchi 2011, 211–212.

193 Bănescu 1946, 47–48; Diaconu 1969 b, 396; Salamon 1971, 494–496; Stănescu 1974, 401; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 97; Bica 2003, 59; Mărculeţ 2005–2006, 311; Krsmanović 2008, 148, 195.

194 Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1983, 262; Mănucu-Adameşteanu, Poll 2006, 446–447; Yotov 2008 a, 351.

the text encouraged speculations and many offered different interpretations. While to some, the region ruled by the toparch must have been in Crimea, others believed the events in question to have taken place in Dobrudja, either in 992, or in 1051, the latter year being established on the basis of some astronomical observation mentioned in the text.[195] Still others went as far as to look for the residence of the toparch in Capidava,[196] Lykostomion,[197] or Vicina.[198]

All discussion on this matter abruptly ended when Ihor Ševčenko demonstrated that the three fragments published by Hase were his own composition, in other words a forgery.[199] Hase had been paid by the Russian chancellor Nikolai Rumiantsev to find and edit ancient sources concerning the old history of Russia. Growing greedy, Hase made up a text, which could be extremely useful in the context of early nineteenth-century concerns with legitimizing the Russian occupation of Crimea and the Lower Danube region (this was in fact just a few years after the occupation of the Romanian region of Bessarabia in 1812). Indeed, most historians writing before Ševčenko's revelations believed the northern protector of the toparch to have been some Rus' ruler (perhaps Vladimir). We cannot present here the entire demonstration made in a 70 pages study, but we still mention some of the most significant facts. The most important clue is the name *Klimata*, which in the text appears to be the name of a city. During Hase's lifetime, it was commonly believed that that name, as found in Constantine Porphyrogenitus' work, applied to a fortress (and not to a theme or a region), which Hase himself further identified with Balaklava. As we have seen, *Klimata* was not a city, but a small theme in Crimea, which existed only for a short time between 841 and ca. 870.[200] Moreover, the name *Maurokastron*, which is mentioned in the text, could not have been in existence in the 10th century. Hase was apparently not aware that ancient Tyras (Cetatea Albă, now Bilhorod Dnistrovs'kyi in Ukraine) was not a city in the 10th century any more, and that the twin towns of *Maurokastron* and *Asprokastron* appeared only during the second half of

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195 Diaconu 1962; Cihodaru 1963; Diaconu 1965 b; Cihodaru 1965; Diaconu 1968, 357–369; Bolşacov-Ghimpu 1972, 104–116; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 42–43; Damian 2004, 299; Mărculeţ 2006, 304, 307–312.

196 Diaconu 1962, 1228.

197 Mărculeţ 2005, 35–36, 41–42; Mărculeţ 2005–2006, 310.

198 Bolşacov-Ghimpu 1972, 111.

199 Ševčenko 1971, 115–188.

200 See footnote 38 and Sokolova 1993, 99.

the 13th century.[201] Contrary to what historians commonly believed during Hase's lifetime, there was no other Maurokastron in Crimea in the 10th century. Even more significant is the mismatch between the use in the text of the expression "Hellenic way of life" and the real significance of the word "Hellenes" for the Byzantines: before the 13th century, "Hellenes" referred to "heathens" or "followers of the ancient philosophy." A tenth-century author could not have possibly used the adjective "Hellenic" in an ethnic sense ("Greek"). Finally, no Greek author would have ever called the Rus' prince *basileos*. Ševčenko's study irritated many,[202] but no serious arguments have since been put forward against his claim that the text was Hase's forgery, and no explanations have been so far provided for the anachronisms to which he pointed. The so-called "Note of the Greek Toparch" is therefore of no real use for the subject of this book.[203]

The survival of the Byzantine rule in the northern Dobrudja after 986 enabled the future recovery of the entire Danube region, as soon as circumstances turned favorable. Basil II's victories against the Arabs in 995–999 were followed by his alliance with the Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim (1001) and the transfer of the army to Europe, in order to continue the war against the Bulgarians. The first major Byzantine victory against Samuel was in 997 on the river Spercheios, when the duke of Thessaloniki Nikephoros Ouranos ambushed the Bulgarian army returning from a raid deep into Greece. The offensive of 1000 in eastern Bulgaria was led by the generals Theodorokanos (duke of Adrianople) and Nikephoros Xiphias (*strategos* of Philippopolis). The cities of Pliska, Preslav, and Little Preslav were quickly taken by this army moving from the theme of Thrace.[204] The territory previously occupied by John Tzimiskes in 971 was thus recovered, but the theme of Ioannoupolis was not recreated, as its territory was now included into the theme of Dristra (the name and evolution of this theme will be discussed in the next chapter), while the katepanate of Western Mesopotamia continued to exist for a while, as Damian Dobromir is known to have beeen its commander until after 1002 (he entered in the Byzantine service in 1001) (see Fig. 3).

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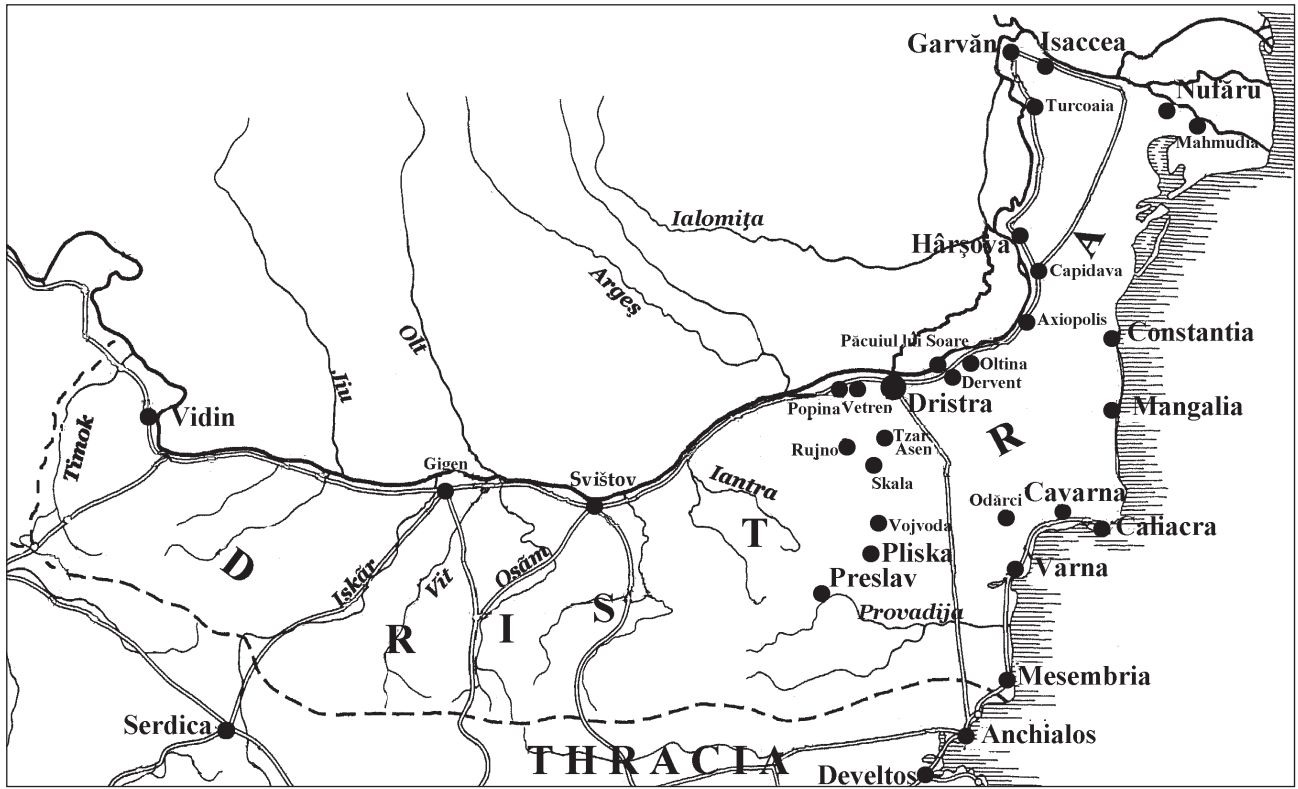
201 For the history of this medieval city see now Rădvan 2010, 473–484.

202 Božilov 1978, 245–259; Diaconu 1981 b, 1111–1133.

203 For the forgery see now Medvedev 2000.

204 Skylitzes, *Basil II and Constantine*, 26 (ed. Thurn, 343–344; transl. Flusin, 287; transl. Wortley, 326); Zonaras, XVII, 8.3–10 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 559); Fine 1991, 197; Whittow 1996, 381; Haldon 2001, 106–107; Stephenson 2003, 111–112; Holmes 2005, 410, 413–414, 495; Yotov 2008 a, 349; Krsmanović 2008, 53, 149, 161. For the seals of Nikephoros Ouranos found in Preslav and Silistra, see Jordanov 2009, 362–363, nr. 997–999.



3. The Danubian region in 1000–1004

A new campaign led by Basil II in 1002 targeted the western part of the Danube region, the area around Vidin, an important city conquered after a difficult siege, which lasted from March to December. The navy made again use of the "Greek Fire," much like at Dristra in 971, but the besieged were able to extinguish it. The strength of the precinct wall made the conquest difficult, and it seems that only the depletion of resources available to people in Vidin made possible Basil II's victory.[205] As Nicolae Iorga has suggested, Vidin was perhaps the center of an autonomous polity within Samuel's state.[206] That city and its hinterland were now to the theme of Dristra. The empire has become a neighbor of Hungary.

Two coalitions emerged in the Danube region in 1002. The aggressors were Byzantium and Hungary, both powers aiming to take control over the area. On the defending side there were Bulgaria, and a duchy that had just rebelled against the Hungarian king. The information about that duchy in the region now known as the Banat is included in the *Legenda Major Sancti Gerardi*,[207] the *vita* of the first bishop of Morisena-Cenad. Morisena was the residence of a duke called Ahtum, who rose against the King Stephen I of Hungary. Two dates have been advanced for the rebellion and the subsequent war: 1003–1004, and sometimes between 1028 and 1034. The second interpretation[208] supports the later chronology because Ahtum was allied with the "Greeks", as it is written in the source. In other words, the war against Ahtum was waged at a moment of decline for the Byzantine power in the region, namely after Basil II's death in 1025. The relation recorded in the tenth chapter in the surviving text of the *Legenda Major Sancti Gerardi* contains several confusions and anachronisms, which make difficult any attempt to establish a clear chronology and the context of the events. For instance, Ahtum is said to have owned the fortresses of Severin and Vidin. However, this is more likely the situation of the 13th and 14th centuries, when both fortresses belonged to Hungary, and not that of the early 11th century. No fort existed in (Turnu) Severin during the latter period. On the other hand, because the Byzantine army had conquered Vidin in 1002, it is unlikely that Ahtum possessed it after that. The most important objection concerns the international relations.

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[205] Skylitzes, *Basil II and Constantine*, 30 (ed. Thurn, 346; transl. Flusin, 289; transl. Wortley, 328); Zonaras, XVII, 8.13–14 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 560); Kuzev 1968, 37–44, 55; Kuzev, Gjuzelev 1981, 103–105; Stephenson 2000, 65; Nikolov 2001, 151; Holmes 2005, 496; Strässle 2006, 168, 275.

[206] Iorga 1937, 14.

[207] SRH, II, 480–560.

[208] Bálint 1991, 116–117.

What reasons would the Byzantines have to support an enemy of their ally, King Stephen I of Hungary, who had fought against Bulgaria together with Basil II in 1002, as well as later?[209] The real enemy of the Byzantines in the Danube region after 1017 were the Pechenegs, not the Hungarians (see below), and the Pechenegs were also the traditional enemies of the Hungarians. Until at least 1028, Byzantium had no interest to support an enemy of Hungary. The same alliance is unlikely for 1002, when Stephen I is known to have provided military assistance to Basil II. No military conflict is mentioned between Hungary and the Byzantine Empire during the period between 1002 and 1038 (the latter year being the latest date so far advanced for Ahtum's rebellion and his war with Stephen). The only solution is that before 1003, Ahtum was in fact Samuel's ally. Some have therefore maintained that the "Greeks" mentioned in the text were Bulgarians, whose name had been replaced since in the late 11th century (when the text was written) Bulgaria was a Byzantine territory.[210] The name "Greeks" is therefore interpreted as a generic designation for eastern monks, regardless their ethnicity. It follows that the date of the war between Ahtum and Stephen I should be placed around 1002.

Ahtum is said to have been baptized in Vidin before the Byzantine conquest of that town, at a time when he was allied with Samuel and Vidin was under the jurisdiction of the Bulgarian patriarchate in Ochrid. Samuel's 997 campaign into Dalmatia and present-day Serbia was the opportunity for a rebellion against the Hungarian duke Vajk (the future king Stephen I). In that year, Gabriel abandoned his Hungarian wife, which brought Bulgaria in conflict with the Hungarians. In 1002, Samuel was therefore in conflict not only with Basil II, but also with Stephen I. This strongly suggests that Ahtum was Samuel's ally.[211] Stephen I's goal in attacking Ahtum was to take over the control over the salt trade along the Mureş valley. In brief, the conflict between Stephen I and Ahtum must be regarded as a side development of the larger confrontation between Basil II and Stephen I, on one hand, and Samuel, on the other hand, for the domination of the Danube region between Vidin and Braničevo.

According to some recent interpretations, Basil II entered a peace treaty with Samuel in 1005, whereby he recognized the Bulgarian state,

[209] For the participation of Stephen I, see Györffy 1964, 149–154; Kosztolnyik 2002, 33.

[210] Fehér 1921, 152–155; Györffy 1964, 149.

[211] The same opinion in Strässle 2006, 155, 333. Makk 1994 a, 27–29 accepted that Samuel was in conflict with Stephen I, but thought that Ahtum was his vassal, fighthing against Samuel.

but only in Macedonia. At that moment, the emperor's intention was not to eliminate Bulgaria, for he was satisfied with the recovery of the region between the Lower Danube and the Stara Planina, as well as of the city of Dyrrachion on the Adriatic coast, a position of considerable strategic and economic importance. The future of Bulgaria was that of a client state.[212] However, in 1014 Basil II changed his mind and decided to occupy all of Bulgaria. He launched a campaign aimed at the conquest of Ochrid, the Bulgarian capital. The decisive victory took place in the Kimbalongon mountain pass on the Strymon River, on July 20th, 1014. The Hungarian king Stephen I took part in that campaign as Basil's ally.[213] The following Bulgarian emperors Gabriel (1014–1015) and John Vladislav (1015–1018) continued the fight, but without much success. The last counteroffensive was organized in 1017 by John Vladislav in cooperation with Krakras, a local ruler from Pernik. The campaign ended in failure when Tzotzikios, the *strategos* of the theme of Dristra, learned about their plans. The Bulgarians tried to recruit the Pechenegs on their side, but the nomads did not budge.[214] This suggests that in 1017 the Pechenegs or at least some of them, were again hostile to the Byzantine Empire, and that the army of the theme of Dristra was able to prevent their invasion.

The remaining part of Macedonia, including Ochrid, the last capital of Bulgaria, was occupied in 1018. The theme of Bulgaria was organized in the same year and included the central region of the Balkans conquered from Bulgaria after 1014, but without the region by the Danube, which remained attached to the province of Dristra. The residence of the duke of Bulgaria was in Skopion (Skopje), and the first to occupy that position was David Arianites, former duke of Thessaloniki.[215] This book is not dealing with

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[212] Stephenson 2000, 69–70; Stephenson 2003, 117–120.

[213] Skylitzes, *Basil II and Constantine*, 35 (ed. Thurn, 348–350; transl. Flusin, 291–292; transl. Wortley, 331–332); Zonaras, XVII, 9.2–10 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 563–564); Györffy 1964, 151; Stănescu 1968 a, 413; Fine 1991, 198; Makk 1994 a, 30; Whittow 1996, 387–388; Stephenson 2000, 71–74; Stephenson 2003, 117–119; Strässle 2006, 333. *Kimbalongon* is the Grecized version of the Vlach name *Câmpulung* ("long field"). According to Strässle 2006, 182–184, Kimbalongon is the Rupel Pass.

[214] Skylitzes, *Basil II and Constantine*, 36–38, 40–41 (ed. Thurn, 350–359; transl. Flusin, 293–299; transl. Wortley, 332–339); Zonaras, XVII, 8.10–26 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 564–567); Bănescu 1946, 70; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 93; Jordanov 1995, 210; Holmes 2005, 415, 418; Strässle 2006, 334, 410; Božilov 2008, 95. Skylitzes gives the name *Tzitzikios*, but the real name was Tzotzikios, identified with Pherses Tzotzikios, *anthypatos*, *patrikios* and strategos of Cappadocia (McGeer, Nesbitt, Oikonomides 2001, 120–121, nr. 43.13) or, better, with his nephew (Stepanenko 2009, 237, 245).

[215] Skylitzes, *Basil II and Constantine*, 41 (ed. Thurn, 358; transl. Flusin, 298; transl. Wortley, 339); Bănescu 1946, 118–120; Stephenson 2000, 72–74; Holmes 2005, 419–422; Borisov 2007, 71; Krsmanović 2008, 55–56; Jordanov 2011 c, 179–180.

the history of that theme, except in relation to the changes in its organization taking place after 1071, when a part of the Middle Danube region was attached to the theme of Bulgaria.

The region along the Danube to the west from Vidin made up a different province, created after 1019, when the Byzantine army moved into the north-western parts of Bulgaria, all the way to Sirmium (Sremska Mitrovica), a city said to have been under a Bulgarian "strategos." The name *Sermon* given for this commander by Skylitzes appears to be a confusion with the name of the city.[216] Gold imitations of Byzantine *nomismata*, struck by a certain *Sermon stratilates* (the latter word being the Greek term for "general") and said to have been found somewhere in the Danube region have been attributed to that Bulgarian commander.[217] They are nothing else but forgeries dated ca. 1870.[218] Following some stratagem, the commander of Sirmium was killed by the general Constantine Diogenes. The theme of Sirmium was thus created in the north-western territory, perhaps on the basis of the former theme of Morava. The new province included the cities of Belgrade and Braničevo, which, like Sirmium, had been part of Bulgaria since the early 9th century. The first commander of the theme of Sirmium was duke Constantine Diogenes, who later moved to the theme of Bulgaria.[219] The theme of Serbia, which is sometimes mistaken for the theme of Sirmium,[220] was actually in what is now Montenegro. That theme was administrated by local Serbian rulers, like Ljudevit, who is mentioned in 1039 with the title of *strategos* of Zachlumia and Serbia.[221]

It appears that the theme of Sirmium had a bridgehead on the left bank of the Danube, at Kuvin, the purpose of which was the defense of the

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[216] Skylitzes, *Basil II and Constantine*, 44 (ed. Thurn, 365–366; transl. Flusin, 303–304; transl. Wortley, 345); Bănescu 1946, 26–27, 120–123, 135 Stephenson 2000, 66; Nikolov 2001, 149–150.

[217] Schlumberger 1925, II, 417–418, 420 (the image of the coin); Iorga 1937, 9.

[218] Metcalf 1979, 54; Oberländer-Târnoveanu 2005, 188, 190; Jordanov 2011 d, 135–139. The forgeries may be attributed to a Bulgarian or a Serbian person, someone well acquainted with the medieval history of the region, for Sermon appears to have been taken as a symbol of the unity of the southern Slavs (Bulgarians and Serbs), during the period just before the liberation of Bulgaria from the Ottomans (1878) and while Serbia existed as an autonomous kingdom supported by Russia.

[219] Wasilewski 1964, 473–474; Kühn 1991, 233–235; Bálint 1991, 104; Stephenson 2000, 66, 74, 124; Holmes 2005, 423, 425; Strässle 2006, 406; Krsmanović 2008, 198–199; Krsmanović 2009, 76.

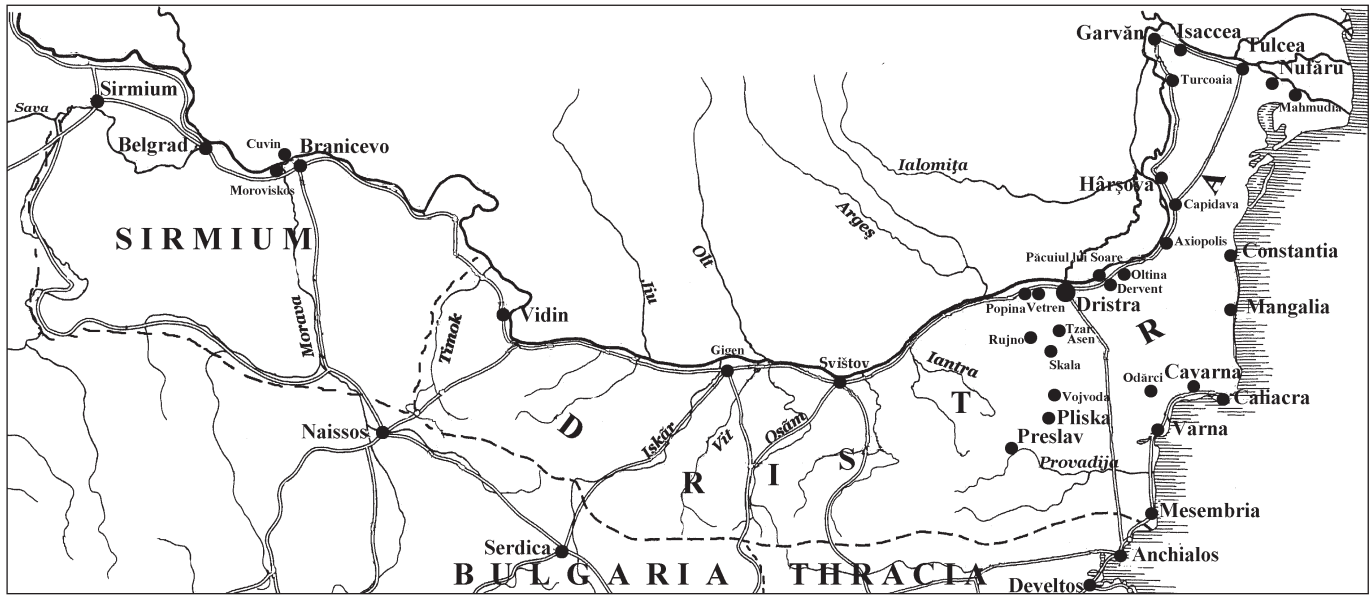
[220] Laurent 1957, 185–195; Wasilewski 1964, 465–472.

[221] Maksimović 1996, 54–56; Stephenson 2000, 66, 74, 123, 126–129; Stephenson 2003, 122–124.

ford at Braničevo. I have demonstrated elsewhere that Kuvin is the same as Dibiskos mentioned in 1019 and 1020 as a parish of the bishopric of Braničevo.[222] The existence of a parish integrated into a Byzantine ecclesiastical structure implies that the Byzantine administration extended on the northern bank of the Danube, the strategic value of which would be obvious in the subsequent conflicts with Hungary. There is, however, no proof that the theme of Sirmium extended any farther into the Banat.

In 1019, therefore, two Byzantine provinces existed along the Danube—Dristra and Sirmium (see Fig. 4). The first one was extended along the lower course of the river, all the way to its mouths. The boundary between the themes of Dristra and Sirmium must have been somewhere in the Iron Gates region around Vidin. It is not known for how long after 1002 did the katepanate of Western Mesopotamia continue to exist in northern Dobrudja, but the absence of later testimonies suggests that it was soon after that incorporated into the theme of Dristra.

[222] Madgearu 2001, 80–84.



4. The Danubian region in 1018/1019

CHAPTER TWO

THE MILITARY ORGANIZATION OF THE DANUBE REGION

1. *The Theme of Dristra (later, Paradunavon)*

More than 700 lead seals dated from 971 to 986, 1000 to 1050, and 1060 to 1088 have been found in a single building in Preslav. Most of them were attached to messages dispatched to military commanders and officials in that town, while others accompanied copies of letters sent from Preslav, which were preserved in the archive stored in that building. The number of lead seals from Preslav is so large, that it may be used to clarify the prosopography and administrative evolution of the territories conquered by the Byzantine Empire in Bulgaria. The Preslav archive includes lead seals of the following *strategoi* of Ioannoupolis that could be dated from 971 to 986, the latter being the date on which the city was conquered by the revived Bulgarian state of Samuel:

– Leo Sarakinopoulos (Ioannoupolis and Dorostolon);
– Theophanes (Thrace and Ioannoupolis);
– Staurakios (Thrace and Ioannoupolis);
– Peter (Ioannoupolis);
– Katakalon (Ioannoupolis).[1]

All of them had the rank of *basilikos protospatharios.* Besides the chief commanders of the theme, we know the name of an officer, Adrian, who also had the rank of *basilikos protospatharios*, but served as a simple turmarch of Preslav. His seal is dated after the moment the city reverted to its old name.[2] A deputy of the commander (*ek prosopou*) of the theme

[1] Jordanov 1982 b, 35–39; Jordanov 1987 a, 89–92; Jordanov 1993, 19, 128–137; Oikonomides 1998, 583–584; Stephenson 2000, 56; Frankopan 2001, 75–97; Jordanov 2003 a, 100–102, nr. 35 B. 15–18, 105, nr. 38. 1, 106, nr. 38. 2, A. 3; Božilov 2008, 93, 95; Yotov 2008 a, 348; Krsmanović 2008, 138; Jordanov 2009, 437–438, nr. 1261–1266, 443–444, nr. 1283–1290; Jordanov 2011 a, 81, nr. 4–23; Jordanov 2011 b, 201. Stoimenov 1996, 84 believes that the residence of *strategos* Katakalon was Helioupolis (Emesa in Syria), which received its name in 975.

[2] Nesbitt, Oikonomides 1991, 153–154, nr. 69.2.

Thrace and Ioannoupolis, named Adralestos Spanopoulos, is known from a seal from Preslav.[3]

Nikephoros Xiphias, who appears on two Preslav seals, was the *strategos* of Thrace and Ioannoupolis, but not before 986, since he must have been too young at that time. As Valery Yotov has noted, his title of *strategos* title should be linked with the war of 1000,[4] but unlike Yotov, I see Nikephoros Xiphias only as the commander of the theme of Thrace, who moved with his army to Ioannoupolis. The bone of contention here is the date at which Ioannoupolis got back its initial name, Preslav.

The first *strategos* of Dristra appointed after *katepano* Sisinios was Leo Sarakinopoulos. He appears on many of his seals with the rank of *imperial protospatharios* and the title of *strategos* of Dorostolon, but most such seals are from an earlier period of his career. He succeeded Nikephoros Xiphias as *strategos* of Thrace, Ioannoupolis and Dorostolon, most probably in 972. After a while, his authority appears to have been limited to Ioannoupolis and Dorostolon alone. The change reflected the departure to Thrace of the troops displaced from that theme. Their commander remained in Ioannoupolis.[5] Leo Sarakinopoulos was sometimes mistaken for another Leo. Vitalien Laurent has demonstrated in 1967 that the initial reading of a fragmentary seal found near Călăraşi,[6] Λέοντ[ι] στρατ(ηγῷ) [Ἰ]στριην(ῷ), was wrong. Laurent's alternative reading, Λέοντ[ι] (βασιλικῷ) στράτορι καὶ τριβυνῷ, has meanwhile accepted as much better, even if some still persist in the old error.[7] The seal is nevertheless important for the military history of the area around Dristra because, being dated to the 10th century, it could be related to John Tzimiskes' campaign. The *strator* (shield-bearer) was a member of the imperial escort, a kind of bodyguard,

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[3] Jordanov 1993, 144, nr. 290; Jordanov 2003 a, 102, nr. 35 B 19; Jordanov 2009, 439, nr. 1269.

[4] Jordanov 1993, 131–132, nr. 250; Jordanov 2003 a, 101, nr. 35B18; Jordanov 2006, 310, nr. 526; Yotov 2008 a, 351–352; Jordanov 2009, 438–439, nr. 1267–1268.

[5] Jordanov 1982 a, 12–23; Diaconu 1986, 173–177; Jordanov 1987 a, 91; Jordanov 1993, 136–137, nr. 259–277, 232, nr. 271 a; Frankopan 2001, 88; Jordanov 2002, 82, nr. 3, 85, nr. 12; Jordanov 2006, 360–362, nr. 604–630; Yotov 2008 a, 346–347; Božilov 2008, 93; Jordanov 2009, 414–415, nr. 1164–1165, 436–437, nr. 1250–1260, 445, nr. 12929–1310; Jordanov 2011 a, 81, nr. 2–23.

[6] Mititelu, Barnea 1966, 46–48; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 75.

[7] Tăpkova-Zaimova 1973, 91–92; Jordanov 2009, 259, nr. 709. For persistence in the old error, see Mărculeţ 2005, 27–28; Mărculeţ 2005–2006, 306; Mărculeţ 2008, 177–181; Mărculeţ 2010 a, 203–207. Moreover, Mărculeţ reproduces Ion Barnea's wrong idea about the owner of the seal being an "Istrian strategos" and identifies him with the *strategos* Leo Chalkotubes mentioned in 1036 (for whom, see below).

and the presence of such a person in the area is obviously linked to that of the emperor.

The list of *strategoi* succeeding Leo Sarakinopoulos in office is as follows:

– Arkadios (*protospatharios* and *strategos* of Dorostolon);[8]
– Marianos (*protospatharios* and *strategos* of Dorostolon);[9]
– Peter (*protospatharios* and *strategos* of Dristra);[10]
– Basilakes (*protospatharios* and *strategos* of Dristra);[11]
– David (*protospatharios* and *strategos* of Thracia and Dristra); certainly dated to the period after the reconquest, as he commanded troops moving with him from Thrace to Dristra;[12]
– Theodor (*primikerios* and *strategos* of Dristra);[13]
– Tzotzikios (*patrikios* and *strategos* of Dorostolon in 1017).[14]

Because the name *Dorostolon* was more similar to the ancient *Durostorum*, it appears to have been first used in the official title, before *Dristra* was adopted instead. As already mentioned, the new name first appears in 975 in the *Taktikon Scorialensis*. If Arkadios and Marianos are the only commanders of *Dorostolon*, then they must have followed Leo Sarakinopoulos, and each other, in rapid succession before 975. There are so far no other known commanders of Dorostolon. Tzotzikios's title, which

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[8] Jordanov 1993, 118, nr. 217; Jordanov 2002, 82, nr. 4; Jordanov 2003 a, 65, nr. 23.2; Ivanov 2008, 138, nr. 2; Božilov 2008, 93; Jordanov 2009, 415, nr. 1166, 499, nr. 1510–1516; Jordanov 2011 b, 202.

[9] Jordanov 2011 a, 81, nr. 1.

[10] Jordanov 1993, 119, nr. 218–219; Jordanov 2002, 83, nr. 7; Jordanov 2003 a, 66, nr. 23.5; Božilov 2008, 93; Yotov 2008 a, 348; Jordanov 2009, 415–416, nr. 1170–1171; Jordanov 2011 a, 82, nr. 30–31. Possibly the same with the *strategos* of Ioannoupolis mentioned above.

[11] Seibt 1995, 224 (who read *Basileios*); Jordanov 2002, 82–83, nr. 5; Jordanov 2003 a, 65, nr. 23.3, Jordanov 2009, 415, nr. 1167; Jordanov 2011 a, 82, nr. 25–26.

[12] Stănescu 1968 b, 44; Diaconu, Vâlceanu 1972, 18; Jordanov, Tăpkova-Zaimova 1988, 120, 122; Jordanov 1992 a, 286, nr. 13; Tăpkova-Zaimova 1993, 97–98; Jordanov 2000, 138, nr. 27; Jordanov 2002, 85, nr. 13; Jordanov 2003 a, 102, nr. 35 C 20; Božilov 2008, 95; Krsmanović 2008, 138–139, 195 (dated to the beginning of the 11th century); Jordanov 2009, 439–440, nr. 1270–1271.

[13] Bănescu 1927, 17; Bănescu 1946, 52, 69–70; Stănescu 1968 b, 42–43; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 89; Tăpkova-Zaimova 1973, 103; Jordanov, Tăpkova-Zaimova 1988, 122; Jordanov 1992 a, 288–289, nr. 19; Jordanov 2000, 138, nr. 31; Jordanov 2002, 83, nr. 6; Jordanov 2003 a, 66, nr. 23.4; Božilov 2008, 95; Jordanov 2009, 416, nr. 1168, 1169; Jordanov 2011 a, 82, nr. 27–29. A signet ring of the same commander was published by Markov 1998, 63–66.

[14] Skylitzes, *Basil II and Constantine*, 40 (ed. Thurn, 356; transl. Flusin, 297; transl. Wortley, 337); Bănescu 1946, 70; Stănescu 1968 b, 43; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 93; Jordanov 1995, 210; Božilov 2008, 95.

also refers to Dorostolon, not to Dristra, is most likely an archaic form deliberately employed by Skylitzes. In conclusion, Sisinios, Leo Sarakinopoulos, Arkadios and Marianos were all commanders of Theodoroupolis/Dorostolon/Dristra between 971 and 974, one for each year. All of them were commanders of the province the center of which was the city of Dorostolon/Dristra, not commanders of the city. At that time, themes were still under the command of *strategoi*, but the transition to an army based on professional, paid soldiers (*tagmata*) would involve the replacement of those commanders with dukes or *katepanoi*.[15] It is not easy to explain why all four commanders stayed in office for such short periods of time. Catherine Holmes observes that the "joint command and rapid turnover have striking parallels with initial periods of rule on newly conquered frontiers in the east."[16] Perhaps the leadership in that newly conquered province was considered the most difficult position in the chain of command in the first years after the conquest. That no seals of civilian officials from the years between 971 and 986 have been found in the Preslav archive suggests that no civilian administration was introduced during the military occupation.[17]

In the Danube region, only one of these initial katepanates was preserved: Western Mesopotamia. The other one, Dristra, was turned into a strategy a few years later, but still under Tzimiskes's reign. This change in status implies a reduction of troops coupled with the decrease in importance in comparison with other frontier regions. The alliance with the Pechenegs across the Danube must have been regarded as sufficient, while troops were badly needed in the East, where the war against the Arabs had resumed. The strategy of Preslav was sufficient for defense in depth and for monitoring one of the main routes to Constantinople. The troops detached from the Thracian province remained at Preslav most probably until 986, under the command of the *strategos* of Ioannoupolis (Preslav). The title of *strategos* of Thrace and Ioannoupolis does not imply the collapse of those provinces into a single administrative unit.[18] It means only that the army brought from Thrace was put under the leadership of the *strategos* based in Ioannoupolis-Preslav. The presence of a strong military

[15] Cheynet 1985, 186–187, 193.
[16] Holmes 2005, 400.
[17] Oikonomides 1998, 588–589.
[18] As maintained, for instance, by Diaconu 1986, 177; Madgearu 1999–2000, 16–17; Stephenson 2000, 56; Holmes 2005, 400; Yotov 2008 a, 345, 348; Krsmanović 2008, 133; Krsmanović 2010, 610.

force in the new theme shows that that was still an occupation regime, not a civilian administration.[19]

The final victory against Bulgaria in 1018 brought a new military and administrative organization of the Balkan Peninsula, primarily through the creation of the themes of Bulgaria, Sirmium and Serbia. Following Nicolae Bănescu[20] and several other historians,[21] I have elsewhere advocated the idea that the province of Paradunavon may be dated to 1018–1020, at the same time as the themes of Bulgaria and Sirmium.[22] By contrast, Ivan Jordanov,[23] Paul Stephenson,[24] Boris Borisov,[25] Ioan Bica[26] and Bojana Krsmanović[27] believe that the absence of seals of the *katepano* of Paradunavon dated before the 1050s can only mean that the theme of Paradunavon theme had not yet been established. According to them, the theme called Dristra must have remained in existence until the Pecheneg troubles of 1045 caused a re-shuffle of the organization of the Lower Danubian region. Tadeusz Wasilewski advanced a third interpretation,[28] according to which the theme or duchy of Paradunavon appeared in 1027, as a result of the Pecheneg raid of that same year. The discovery of a seal of Leo Drymis, *anthypatos, patrikios* and *katepano* of Dristra has put an end to this controversy. The title of *katepano* proves that Leo was the commander of the theme, and not of the city of Dristra.[29] It is known that he was *vestis* and *katepano* of Bulgaria sometime between 1055 and 1065 (Werner Seibt has established a new chronology for his seals).[30] He

[19] Whittow 1996, 296; Oikonomides 1998, 588–589.

[20] Bănescu 1946, 54–60.

[21] Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 76, 93–95; Tăpkova-Zaimova 1973, 103, 112; Kuzev 1979, 37; Jordanov, Tăpkova-Zaimova 1988, 122; Kühn 1991, 223–224; Tăpkova-Zaimova 1993, 98; Mărculeţ 2005, 57–59; Strässle 2006, 460. Diaconu 1992 b, 327 accepted Bănescu's theory on the basis of a wrong identification of Michael, *vestarches* and *katepano* of Paradunavon with a ruler of the Paristrian cities in 1045–1047 (see below). The date accepted by Diaconu was regarded as sufficient proof that Bănescu had been right about the *katepano* of Paradunavon appearing soon after the 1020s. I have also followed Diaconu in this respect in my previous studies, but this opionion is now obsolete.

[22] Madgearu 1999 a, 422; Madgearu 1999–2000, 20; Madgearu 2001, 76.

[23] Jordanov 1987 b, 202; Jordanov 2002, 81; Jordanov 2003 a, 136; Jordanov 2003 b, 73.

[24] Stephenson 2000, 78, 94; Stephenson 2003, 115.

[25] Borisov 2007, 71.

[26] Bica 2003, 98–107.

[27] Krsmanović 2008, 194–195.

[28] Wasilewski 1975, 642, 645.

[29] Jordanov 2002, 80–81, nr. 1; Jordanov 2003 a, 62; Jordanov 2006, 147, nr. 209.2; Jordanov 2011 a, 82, nr. 34.

[30] Laurent 1969, 146; Seibt 1995, 227; Jordanov 2011 c, 168–169, 182. Previously, it was considered that Leo Drymis was duke of the Bulgarian theme by the end of the 12th century (Bănescu 1946, 151–152).

must therefore have been *katepano* of Dristra before that, which implies that the official name Dristra for the Danube province remained in use until the mid-11th century. This is now a final conclusion.

The first known commander of the theme of Dristra, whose term may be associated with precisely dated events (the Rus' attack of 1043, for which see chapter III. 2), is *vestis* Katakalon Kekaumenos, whom Skylitzes describes as "ruler (*archon*) of the Istrian cities and lands" (ἄρχων ὢν τῶν παρὰ τὸν Ἴστρον πόλεων καὶ χωρίων). This is in fact a well known character of Byzantine history. In April 1042, Katakalon Kekaumenos was in Constantinople, while at some point during the last months of 1045 he was appointed duke of Iberia. This must therefore have become *katepano* between 1042/1043 and 1045.[31] Two seals of Κατακαλὼν Καμεν, ἀνθύπατος καὶ κατεπάνο were found in Pliska.[32] They show that the office of *katepano* has been introduced to the Danube province of Dristra in the 1040s, most probably as a response to the serious Pecheneg invasion of 1036. A *katepano* or a duke was the commander of *tagmata*, a kind of professional soldiers dispatched from the central army. In older themes, commanders continued to be called *strategoi* until the first two or three decades of the 11th century, but provinces created under Basil II had dukes or *katepanoi* as commanders, no doubt because troops under their command were units of the central army (*tagmata*). The first dukes are mentioned in the western provinces of the Empire, in Thessaloniki and Adrianople, and then in Western Mesopotamia. After 976, dukes became involved primarily in the war against Samuel, and new and better troops stationed in Thessaloniki and Adrianople were put under the command of dukes, who replaced the *strategoi*. Thessaloniki and Adrianople became the most important military bases of the Balkan region under Basil II.[33]

The next *katepano* of the Danube province was *patrikios* Michael, son of Anastasios. According to Skylitzes, he was the "ruler of the Paristrian cities" (ἄρχων τῶν Παριστρίων πόλεων). Michael is mentioned two times in relation to the Pecheneg crisis of the 1040s, which will be discussed

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[31] Skylitzes, *Constantine Monomachos*, 6 (ed. Thurn, 433; transl. Flusin, 360; transl. Wortley, 407); Bănescu 1946, 74–78; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 127; Wasilewski 1975, 643; Jordanov 1995, 210–211; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 177; Jordanov 2003 b, 63–64; Bica 2003, 98–99; Božilov 2008, 96; Jordanov 2011 a, 113. For his career, see Savvides 1986–1987, 22–23.

[32] Jordanov 1992 a, 290–291, nr. 24; Jordanov 2000, 139, nr. 35; Jordanov 2006, 174–176, nr. 257–258; Jordanov 2009, 488, nr. 1465–1466.

[33] Cheynet 1985, 186; Holmes 2005, 403–412; Strässle 2006, 216; Krsmanović 2008, 77–79, 143, 148–159; Krsmanović 2010, 609–610, 623–625, 631.

in the following chapter.[34] The chronology of the events was confused before Jacques Lefort's conclusive study, dedicated to the oration of John Mauropous, the metropolitan of Euchaita. Lefort showed that the invasion of the Pechenegs under their chief named Tyrach, which took place while Michael was still in office, must be dated between December 1046 and January 1047.[35] Meanwhile, Alexander Kazhdan argued that the other Pecheneg group led by Kegen had crossed the Danube in 1045, when Michael was already a commander there.[36] This implies that he was in office between 1045 and 1047, after Katakalon Kekaumenos. He is most likely to have lost his position after the invasion of Tyrach, since he was incapable of dealing with the Pecheneg crisis and securing the defense of the province. Skylitzes makes it very clear that the second Pecheneg invasion was made possible by the frontier not being guarded, while according to Kekaumenos (the Byzantine writer and aristocrat from Larissa, not the military commander!) the Pechenegs took advantage of the incompetence of the local commanders (*akritai*).[37] At any rate, Michael was replaced by one of two subsequent *katepanoi* of Dristra, either Leo Drymis or Constantine (. . .)polites. The latter's truncated name is known from a seal, on which he appears with the title *patrikios* and *katepano* of Dristra. The seal may be dated between 1030 and 1040,[38] but also after 1047, the year of Michael's removal. In that case, Leo Drymis must have succeeded the *katepano* with truncated name, sometime in the early 1050s. Michael, on the other hand, resurfaced as *magistros* in 1057, and was involved in the plot that led Isaac I Comnenos to imperial power.[39]

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[34] Skylitzes, *Constantine Monomachos*, 16–17 (ed. Thurn, 455–459; transl. Flusin, 377–380; transl. Wortley, 427–430); Bănescu 1946, 74–78; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 129–130; Wasilewski 1975, 643–644; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 178; Jordanov 2003 b, 64–65; Bica 2003, 99–100; Božilov 2008, 96.

[35] Lefort 1976, 273–284.

[36] Kazhdan 1977, 65–77. Shepard 1975, 71–75 had dated the invasion of Tyrach to the winter 1048–1049, but it was only Lefort's demonstration that settled the issue.

[37] Skylitzes, *Constantine Monomachos*, 17 (ed. Thurn, 458; transl. Flusin, 379; transl. Wortley, 429–430); Kekaumenos, 47 (ed. Spadaro, 82/83).

[38] Nesbitt, Oikonomides 1991, 150, nr. 65.1; Jordanov 2002, 81–82, nr. 2; Jordanov 2003 a, 62; Božilov 2008, 96. Only the letters . . . *ist* . . . remained from the name of the province, and this cannot be "Paristrion" as suggested in the Dumbarton Oaks Catalogue, because all other seals indicate "Paradunavon." Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 183 dated him without any arguments to the third quarter of the 11th century. I have previously (Madgearu 1999 a, 422) advanced the idea that this *katepano* was in office in 1010ss or 1020s, as I believed the theme of Paradunavon to have come into being immediately after 1018. My (wrong) conclusion was reproduced by Mărculeţ 2005, 60 and Meško 2006, 131.

[39] Skylitzes, *Michael the Old*, 12 (ed. Thurn, 498; transl. Flusin, 409; transl. Wortley, 463).

The following *katepano* was no other than Romanos Diogenes, who later became emperor between 1068 and 1071. According to Michael Attaliates, as he was still duke of Serdica in 1067, Romanos summoned the people whom the Byzantine author calls *Sauromatai* to assist him against Emperor Constantine X Dukas (1059–1067). The *Sauromatai* apparently knew him since he had fought against them, as a ruler of the Paristrian cities (ἄρχων τῶν περὶ τὸν Ἴστρον πόλεων). *Magister* Nikephoros Botaneiates had saved Romanos Diogenes in the war against the *Sauromatai*. Much of the discussion surrounding this story revolves around the identity of the *Sauromatai* and the chronology of the events. Although Attaliates employs the archaism *Sauromatai* mostly in reference to Hungarians, in this case he seems to have had the Pechenegs in mind. The general context of events fits the year 1053, when Nikephoros Botaneiates is known to have assisted Romanos during the battle near Preslav, in which Basil Monachos, the duke of Bulgaria, was killed. Troops from the Danube theme took part in that battle.[40] It is unlikely that the events mentioned took place in 1059, since the campaign of that year was under the command of Isaac I Comnenos, who defetead the Pechenegs.[41] Romanos Diogenes must have been *katepano* of Dristra in 1053, but the length of his term remains unknown. A seal found at Vetren has him with the titles *vestarches* and *katepano*, but without the name of the province.[42] Another seal from the same *boulloterion* was later found in Silistra.[43] That seal must be dated after Romanos Diogenes served as commander of Dristra, for he received the rank of *vestarches* in 1067, as a reward for a victory against the Pechenegs obtained at the time he was duke of Serdica.[44] There is a strong possibility that the letter sent to Vetren on the Danube concerned

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[40] Attaliates, ed. Bekker, 37–43, 97 (ed. Pérez Martín, 29–33, 73–74); Skylitzes, *Constantine Monomachos*, 17 (ed. Thurn, 458; transl. Flusin, 379–380; transl. Wortley, 430–431); Kekaumenos, 67 (ed. Spadaro, 100/101); Bănescu 1946, 83; Stănescu 1966, 55; Diaconu 1970, 75, 93; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 178; Bica 2003, 139–141; Stoimenov 2008, 177–180. In 1059, Nikephoros Botaneiates was duke of Edessa and Antioch (Cheynet 1983, 461; McGeer, Nesbitt, Oikonomides 2005, 24; Karagiorgou 2008, 108–111, 128).

[41] Attaliates, ed. Bekker, 67 (ed. Pérez Martín, 51–52); Skylitzes Continuatus, 107; Zonaras, XVIII, 6.1–5 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 671); Matthew of Edessa, II, 5 (ed. Dostourian, 90–91); Michael the Syrian, XV.2 (ed. Chabot, 165) (the attack of Isaac against *Partiqayê*, the Pechenegs); Diaconu 1970, 76–77; Spinei 2006, 197; Spinei 2009, 112.

[42] Atanasov, Jordanov 1994, 37–40, nr. 116; Jordanov 1995, 212; Jordanov 2003 b, 65; Jordanov 2006, 128–130, nr. 167; Krsmanović 2008, 195; Božilov 2008, 96 (dated around 1065); Jordanov 2009, 494, nr. 1490.

[43] Jordanov, Žekova 2007, 125, nr.326; Jordanov 2009, 494, nr. 1491.

[44] Zonaras, XVIII, 10.12 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 684); Dančeva-Vassileva 2004, 24. For the titles of Romanos Diogenes, see Jordanov 2003 b, 65.

military operations against the Pechenegs north of the Danube who controlled at that time the southern bank of the river as well.

In my opinion, Romanos Diogenes's successor was Demetrios Katakalon, the first commander to be called *katepano* of Paradunavon. Five seals (among which two from Silistra and one from Pliska) have him with the title *anthypatos, patrikios* and *katepano* of Paradunavon.[45] A chronological point of reference for his career is the destruction of Krivina, a settlement on which another one of his seals was found, which bears the titles *patrikios* and *strategos*. The Krivina seal must obviously be dated before Demetrios Katakalon became *katepano* of Paradunavon. Another seal mentioning him as *strategos*, not *katepano* was found in Silistra.[46] As *patrikios* and *strategos*, Demetrios Katakalon must have been the commander of an unknown city in the region. According to the numismatic evidence, the settlement in Krivina was destroyed during the Pecheneg invasion of 1047. Petre Diaconu therefore believed that Demetrios Katakalon had been appointed *strategos* in the late 1030s.[47] He then became the commander of Paradunavon at some point after 1050 or even after 1055, since is known to have become *proedros* at a later time, after obtaining the command of Paradunavon. The rank of *proedros* was bestowed upon provincial dukes particularly during the reign of Constantine X.[48] On the other hand, according to three seals from Silistra, Demetrios Katakalon received two other titles while being *katepano* of Paradunavon, namely *anthypatos* and *vestis*.[49] This can only mean that he remained in office for quite some time. This strongly suggests that his term post-dated that of Romanos Diogenes, and that it therefore started after 1055. The time span between the moment in which he was appointed *strategos* (around 1040) and the moment in which he is known to have been *proedros* and *katepano* (after 1055) is consistent with the *cursus* of the average Byzantine commander.[50]

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[45] Bănescu 1946, 95–97 (Silistra and Constantinople); Nesbitt, Oikonomides 1991, 153, nr. 67.1 (unknown location); Jordanov 2003 a, 136–137, nr. 58. 1; Jordanov 2006, 198–199, nr. 302–303; Ivanov 2008, 140, nr. 6 (Pliska); Jordanov 2009, 463–464, nr. 1373–1375, 487, nr. 1462.

[46] Jordanov 1981, 92–95; Jordanov 2003 a, 137; Jordanov 2006, 198, nr. 300–301; Jordanov 2009, 502–503, nr. 1530, 1531.

[47] Diaconu 1992 a, 179–181.

[48] Laurent 1969, 145; Diaconu 1992 a, 181.

[49] Jordanov 2006, 198–199, nr. 302–304.

[50] Bănescu 1946, 95–97 (accepted by Jordanov 1981, 92–94; Jordanov, Tăpkova-Zaimova 1988, 123; Jordanov 2003 a, 136–137, nr. 58.1; Jordanov 2003 b, 68–69). Stănescu 1968 b, 48 proposed the end of the 11th century. Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1995, 350 (the same in

After Demetrios Katakalon, Theodore Pegonites was invested with the office of *katepano* of Paradunavon. He also had the ranks of *patrikios* and *anthypatos*, according to his seal found in Izvorovo (near Silistra), which is dated between 1050 and 1060. A seal with the same legend has recently appeared in an auction (its findspot is therefore unknown). In another seal from the 1040s, Theodore Pegonites is mentioned only as *strategos*, and sometimes before 1065 he appears to have gained the title of duke of Edessa.[51]

With all those commanders, the name of *Paradunavon* attached to their titles indicates a new organization of the Danube region. The theme of Dristra was thus replaced by the theme of Paradunavon, no doubt covering much of the same area. The change was introduced under Isaac I Comnenos (1057–1059), mostly likely in 1059, during the war against Hungary and the Pechenegs, which will be discussed below. The implication of this dating is that both theories advanced earlier are wrong. Bănescu's idea (which I have also endorsed) places the change in 1018, at the same time as the creation of the themes of Bulgaria and Sirmium. Wasilewski's idea, later developed by Paul Stephenson, links the transformation of the military organization at the Danube to the new policy implemented during the Pecheneg crisis, which started in 1045. The analysis of the seals of commanders shows, however, that the name Paradunavon was not used as an official title before the late 1050s.[52] The first *katepano* of Paradunavon was Demetrios Katakalon, in function in 1059.

The name *Paristrion* which appears in the written sources was never used officially, as it is absent from the nomenclature of the seals.[53] The official name *Paradunavon* means "near the Danube." The river, in this case, is not the traditional (and by this time quite archaic) *Istros* or the equally pretentious Δάνουβις (a name of Latin origin employed by Anna Comnena and Zonaras), but the *Dunav*, a name of Bulgarian origin. The Byzantine authorities most obviously borrowed the name from the population living by the river, and preferred it to old provincial name derived

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Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 181–182) thought that Demetrios Katakalon was duke in *ca*. 1070. Božilov 2008, 97 even proposed the 1080s.

[51] Matthew of Edessa, II, 27 (ed. Dostourian, 108); McGeer, Nesbitt, Oikonomides 2001, 163, nr. 73.2; Jordanov 2003 a, 137, nr. 58.2; Jordanov 2003 b, 69–70; Jordanov 2006, 343, nr. 573; Wassiliou-Seibt 2008, 134; Wassiliou-Seibt 2009, 307–309, nr. 5 a–c; Jordanov 2009, 464, nr. 1376; Jordanov 2011 a, 84, nr. 51–51a.

[52] The same opinion in Jordanov 2003 b, 73; Jordanov 2011 a, 85–86.

[53] Stănescu 1968 b, 42–64 considered that the province had three successive names: Dristra, Paradunavon, Paristrion. This point of view is now obsolete.

from Dristra. As Eugen Stănescu noted, it must have been a concession made to the local population, and it is quite possible that the new provincial name is at the origin of the Bulgarian name *Podunavia*, which appears in 14th-century Walachian charters.[54]

In his account of the Oghuz invasion of 1065,[55] Michael Attaliates mentions the names of two "rulers of the Danubian cities" (ἐπάρχοντος κατὰ τὸν Ἴστρον πόλεων), Basil Apokapes and Nikephoros Botaneiates. The continuator of Skylitzes and Zonaras[56] reproduce the same information. Basil Apokapes was taken prisoner by the Oghuz, but managed to escape with the assistance of a barbarian. Because the existence of two commanders for the same province at once is impossible, Tadeusz Wasilewski[57] and Petre Diaconu[58] have proposed that in 1065 the theme of Paradunavon had been divided into two smaller provinces—Western and Eastern Paristrion. Wasilewski dated the change to 1059, under Isaac I Comnenos. Diaconu embraced the idea, and suggested that Basil Apokapes had been entrusted with the command of the Western Paristrion. Nicolae Bănescu had a different opinion on this matter. According to him, in 1065 Nikephoros Botaneiates was duke of Bulgaria in 1065,[59] but he failed to produce any evidence to support his argument. On the contrary, it is likely that that office was at the time occupied by *vestarches* Andronikos Philokales, who is attested in 1066.[60] Bănescu also tried to prove that Basil Apokapes was duke of Paradunavon in 1059, and that he had remained in that office until 1065, when he was captured.[61] Diaconu, based on the order in which the two dukes are mentioned by the continuator of Skylitzes, believed that Basil Apokapes was the commander of the "Bulgarian" troops, which are mentioned first. Those "Bulgarians" were soldiers from the province

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[54] Stănescu 1968 b, 56–57. The name was most obviously still in use in the 14th century in Bulgaria. Emperor Ivan Alexander is said to have been ruler of Podunavie in a document dated to 1337 (Petkov 2008, 468).

[55] Some studies mention the year 1064, but the right date results from the chronicle of Matthew of Edessa (see below).

[56] Attaliates, ed. Bekker, 83 (ed. Pérez Martín, 63); Skylitzes Continuatus, 113–114; Zonaras, XVIII, 9.2 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 678).

[57] Wasilewski 1964, 479–480 (Basil Apokapes in west, Botaneiates in east). The theory was reproduced with some changes in Wasilewski 1995, 198.

[58] Diaconu 1970, 82–99.

[59] Bănescu 1946, 32–34, 89–90, 142–143. See also Cheynet 1983, 461–462; Kühn 1991, 230; Grünbart 1998, 38; Karagiorgou 2008, 128–129; Jordanov 2011 c, 182.

[60] Kekaumenos, 181 (ed. Spadaro, 218/219); Bănescu 1946, 144; Kühn 1991, 230; Jordanov 1993, 160–161, nr. 323; Jordanov 2009, 483, nr. 1444; Valeriev 2010, 428; Jordanov 2011 c, 157–158, 182.

[61] Bănescu 1946, 84–90.

based in Serdica (Sofia), to which Diaconu referred as Western Paristrion. The hypothesis is not very convincing, and even Diaconu admitted that the solution to the problem may be different. That the theme of Paradunavon was split into two smaller provinces has also been maintained by Vasilka Tăpkova-Zaimova, who thought that Nikephoros Botaneiates ruled the western part of the theme, while Basil Apokapes was the commander of the eastern part.[62]

Other sources concerning Basil Apokapes substantiate an alternative interpretation.[63] He appears, for example, in the will of an aristocrat from Cappadocia named Eustathios Boilas.[64] A man called Βασιλείου μαγίστρου τοῦ Παραδούναβι is also mentioned among the various provincial commanders at the end of a will drafted for Boilas by the monk Theodoulos on April 4th, 1059. He appears with his full name (Basil Apokapes) among the executors of the will. He was born in Tayk, much like Boilas and the local bishop (the other executors). Because only dukes of several eastern provinces were mentioned in Theodoulos' note, the presence of a commander of Paradunavon in the East for this occasion is hard to imagine. No explanation was offered in this respect either by Bănescu or by other scholars who followed him.[65]

The reading Βασιλείου μαγίστρου τοῦ Παραδούναβι was established in 1910 by the first editor of the will, Spyros Lambros, and was accepted as such by Bănescu.[66] However, the reading is far from clear, as the lines are placed on both sides of the cross of Saint John Climacus, in the eschatocol of the document, and could thus be read in two different ways. Vasil N. Zlatarski,[67] followed by Rats M. Bartikian,[68] regarded the words τοῦ Παραδούναβι as linked to the name of Aaron, the duke of Mesopotamia, and the son of the last Bulgarian Emperor, John Vladislav.[69] Paradoúnabi was in this case a nickname pertaining to the man's origin from a certain region ("from the

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62 Tăpkova-Zaimova 1973, 106–109.

63 The first form of this argument was presented in Madgearu 1998. The study of other works not available to me at the time, and consultation of studies published after 1998 have led to a refined version of the same ideas presented in Madgearu 2005.

64 The source was translated and commented by Vryonis 1957, 263–277. Another major contribution in this respect is Lemerle 1977, 15–63.

65 Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 133; Lemerle 1977, 40–42; Barnea 1986, 271; Savvides 1991–1992, 98–103; Grünbart 1998, 37–40; Mohov 1999, 158–168; Stephenson 2000, 94; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 179–180.

66 Bănescu 1946, 84–89; Bănescu 1963, 155–158.

67 Zlatarski 1929, 22–34.

68 Bartikian 1967, 315–319.

69 About Aaron, see Jordanov 1990, 107–108; Jordanov, Žekova 2007, 65, nr. 140.

province near the Danube"). If so, then Basil Apokapes was simply duke of Iberia, like John Monasteriotou, who is mentioned after him. The existence of two dukes in Iberia means that one of them, Basil Apokapes, was in fact the ruler of the Armenian-Georgian district of Tayk.[70]

In conclusion, the final part of the will reads κατεπάνω Ἐδέσες Ἰωάννου τοῦ Δουκήτζη, δουκῶντος Ἀδριανοῦ Ἀντιοχείας, Ἀαρὼν προέδρου καὶ αυτοδέλφου τῆς αυγούστης Μεσοποταμίας τοῦ Παραδούναβι, Βασιλείου μαγίστρου, Ἰωάννου Μοναστιριότου Ἠβηρίας, Πανκρατίου Βαασπρακανίας καὶ Ἰωάννου κοροπαλάτου καὶ δομεστίκου τῶν σχολῶν αυτοδέλφου τοῦ βασιλέως Κομνηνοῦ. John Dukitzes, Aaron, John Monasteriotes and John Comnenos are all well-known men. Adrian was identified with a member of the Dalassenos family; Pankratios (the duke of Vaspurakan) is the same with the Armenian prince Bagrat Vakhac'i.[71] *Magister* Basil has no relation with the name *Paradunavon*. On the other hand, the form τοῦ Παραδούναβι may simply be a mistake if it is taken as the title of a provincial commander. In that case, it should read τοῦ Παραδούναβου. At any rate, the phrase must be understood as "the man from the Danubian region," and applies to Aaron, and not to Basil.

Ion Barnea[72] defended Bănescu's idea with new arguments concerning the relationship between Basil Apokapes and Paradunavon, when publishing a seal found during archaeological excavations in Nufăru.[73] Three other, identical seals have been discovered in Silistra, Bradvari, and an unknown location in north-eastern Bulgaria, while a fourth one is known from the Zacos collection.[74] All of them have the legend "Basil Apokapes, *magistros, vestis* and *dux*" (μαγίστρῳ βέστῃ καὶ δουκὶ). The complete text of the legend was established by M. Grünbart after the piece from the Zacos collection (the single one preserved entirely).[75] None of those seals mentions the name of the province, for which Basil Apokapes served as duke.

Because several seals of Basil Apokapes have been discovered within the territory of Paradunavon, Barnea believed he had been the commander of

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[70] So Bartikian. Yuzbashian 1973–1974, 164–165 rejects the idea of Apokapes being duke of Iberia, but failed to offer an identification for Tayk.

[71] Lemerle 1977, 40–42. For Pankratios see also Yuzbashian 1973–1974, 152.

[72] Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 133.

[73] Barnea 1986, 271; Barnea 1987 a, 194; Barnea 1987 b, 84–85, nr. 7.

[74] Jordanov 1986, 123–124; Grünbart 1998, 37–38; Jordanov 2003 b, 66; Jordanov 2006, 56–57, nr. 43–45; Jordanov 2009, 485, nr. 1449–1451.

[75] Grünbart 1998, 37–38.

that province.[76] The same line of reasoning was followed in a much cited study of the diffusion of seals.[77] In fact, all that those seals from Paradunavon show is that Basil Apokapes had for a while some office implying correspondence between him and officers in that province. The seals themselves do not prove in any way that he was the commander of the province, since it is quite possible that he was the commander of an army corps moved to Paradunavon from elsewhere.

Basil Apokapes is also mentioned in the chronicle of Matthew of Edessa as having been at the head of an army, which Emperor Constantine X sent to the Danube against the Oghuz. The Armenian chronicle covers the period between 952 and 1136, the year of its author's death. Although primarily dealing with events in Armenia, it often offers useful details about developments elsewhere in the Empire, on the basis of information from other, now lost sources. Edouard Dulaurier's old translation was used by most historians who wrote on Basil Apokapes. The more recent English translation is based on a diferent, and apparently better manuscript. According to that manuscript, "in the year 514 of the Armenian era [1065–1066], during the reign of the Roman emperor Dukas, a great war broke out in the West caused by the nation of the Uzes. The emperor Dukas collected troops from all the Greeks and from the forces of Armenia. He appointed the illustrious Roman magnate Basil, the son of Abukab, as commander of these forces. Basil, advancing with many troops, came and descended upon the great river called the Danube. Here on the banks of the river a violent battle took place between the Romans and the Uzes, and there was heavy slaughter on both sides (…). The enemy captured Basil, the Roman general, and led him into captivity to their country (…). For many years Basil remained captive in the country of the Uzes (…). After a while one of the infidel troops contemplated freeing Basil, and the general, in turn, promised to give him many things, including a position of high rank from the emperor. A few days later this man, with the help of some of his friends, snatched Basil and immediately brought him to the emperor Dukas. Thus there was much rejoicing among all the Greeks, and the emperor gave many gifts to those who had brought Basil. After this Basil came to his father Abukab in Edessa."[78] Matthew of Edessa

[76] Barnea 1987 a, 194. The same opinion (Basil Apokapes as duke of Paradunavon between 1059 and 1065) at Mărculeţ 2005, 65–68; Mărculeţ 2008, 189–196; Božilov 2008, 96; Mărculeţ 2009, 163–177; Jordanov 2011 a, 114–115.

[77] Cheynet, Morrisson 1990, 118.

[78] Matthew of Edessa, II, 24 (ed. Dostourian, 105); Yuzbashian 1973–1974, 146–147.

mentions another transfer of troops from the East to the Danube, when in 1040 Emperor Michael IV moved troops from the themes of Sebasteia, Taron and Vaspurakan against the Bulgarian rebel Peter Delian.[79] So, this was not something unusual.

To judge from the information culled from the chronicle of Matthew of Edessa, Basil Apokapes came to the Danube in 1065 as duke of an army gathered from several provinces, including Armenia. It is quite clear that he was not appointed commander over any province in the region to which the army had been sent.[80] This explains quite neatly why the seals of Basil Apokapes have no mention of province in relation to his title of duke. He was neither a deputy, nor the commander of Paradunavon, but the general of the troops summoned for assistance. Like Michael Attaliates and the continuator of Skylitzes, Matthew of Edessa knew that Basil Apokapes had escaped from the captivity, but added that he later returned to his father Aboukab (Michael Apokapes) in Edessa. He gives further details about Basil's life, including the fact that he died Edessa in 1083 or 1084.[81] For this Armenian historian from Edessa, Basil Apokapes was a great local hero, the member of an illustrious family. Even though he wrote at a great distance from the Danube, he was well informed about his hero's life. There is no reason to doubt his testimony, and completely pointless to rely instead on the chronicle of Smbat Sparapet,[82] who provides no additional details of any relevance, since his is just a summary of Matthew's account.

Michael Attaliates and Skylitzes wrote about Basil Apokapes battling the Seljuk Turks as commander of Mantzikert (a fortress in the theme of Vaspurakan, which was the province created after the occupation of the Armenian kingdom with the same name in 1022).[83] In 1054 or 1055 he was the *strategos* of that city (Attaliates calls him a *hegemon*), but not the *katepano* of the province, as attested by a seal from the Zacos collection,

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[79] Matthew of Edessa, I, 80 (ed. Dostourian, 68).

[80] As noted Guilland 1971, 1–2, Basil Apokapes "fut chargé de défendre avec le magistros Nicéphor Botaniate les places fortes du Danube". This seems to be the best interpretation of the source.

[81] Other seals show that later in his life Basil Apokapes was duke of Edessa: *proedros, protoproedros, protonobelissimos* and finally *sebastos*: Grünbart 1998, 38–40; McGeer, Nesbitt, Oikonomides 2001, 163, nr. 73.1; Cheynet 2001 a, 59–66, nr. 32, 33. His brother Pharasmanes is also known. He was *strategos* of Strumitza in the 1040s and *vestarches* in 1059 (Grünbart 1998, 31; Jordanov 2006–2007, 522–524; Jordanov 2008, 45–49, nr. 16).

[82] Mărculeţ 2008, 193–194; Mărculeţ 2009, 169.

[83] Yuzbashian 1973–1974, 148.

on which he appears with the titles of *protospatharios* and *strategos*.[84] Seven other seals belong to a later period of his life, when already had the titles of *vestarches* and *katepano* of Vaspurakan (Βαασπουρακανίας). Two of those seals are from Pliska, one from Malka Popina (west of Silistra), one from an unknown location in north-eastern Bulgaria, one from the collection in the Hermitage Museum, and two from the Zacos collection.[85] M. Grünbart (based on some stylistic features of the seals) has dated all of them to the 1030s, and has attributed them to another Basil Apokapes.[86] However this cannot be so, because the title of *vestarches* was most typical for military commanders between 1040 and 1080.[87] A better solution is to have Basil Apokapes promoted from *vestis* to *vestarches* at the time of his appointment as *katepano* of Vaspurakan. Because four seals recording the title of *vestarches* were found in Paradunavon, the promotion must have taken place while Apokapes was already in the Danube region, but still a *katepano* of Vaspurakan. It is theoretically possible that the letters to which those seals were attached had been sent from Vaspurakan to Dristra and Pliska, but it is more likely that Apokapes was already in Paradunavon with his army, when sending those letters out.

The order in which Basil Apokapes' titles appear on seals is the following: *patrikios, magistros, vestis, vestarches, proedros*, etc. In 1054 or 1055, he was only *patrikios*, but he later became *magistros* and *dux*. He may have been promoted dux of Tayk as a reward for his victory at Mantzikert. In this case, he became *magistros* and duke of Tayk in 1055 or shortly after that.

Basil Apokapes' *cursus* may therefore be reconstructed as following:[88]

in 1054 or 1055, he was *patrikios* and *strategos* of Mantzikert;

after 1055 he was appointed

– *magistros* and duke of Tayk, and was still in that office in 1059 when he is mentioned in the will of Eustathios Boilas;

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[84] Attaliates, ed. Bekker, 46 (ed. Pérez Martín, 35); Skylitzes, *Constantine Monomachos*, 19 (ed. Thurn, 462–464; transl. Flusin, 382–383; transl. Wortley, 432); Bănescu 1946, 85; Grousset 1947, 597–598, 600; Grünbart 1998, 33.

[85] Jordanov 1986, 126; Jordanov 1992 a, 283; Grünbart 1998, 35–36; Jordanov 2000, 138; Mănucu-Adameşteanu, Jordanov 2002, 125; Jordanov 2003 a, 43, nr. 14.1; Jordanov 2006, 56, nr. 40–42; Jordanov, Žekova 2007, 108, nr. 278; Jordanov 2009, 407–408, nr. 1130–1133.

[86] Grünbart 1998, 36.

[87] Seibt 1978, 226; Cheynet 1983, 471. For instance: Iberia: Michael Iasites (1044–1045), Ioannes Monasteriotes (1059); Bulgaria: Michael Saronites (1073–1074); Dyrrachion: Michael Maurik (1067). See Yuzbashian 1973–1974, 164; Kühn 1991, 189, 226, 231, 238.

[88] For his career see also Savvides 1991–1992, 98–103; Grünbart 1998, 37–40.

in 1065, he was

– *vestarches* and *katepano* of Vaspurakan, as well as *magistros*, *vestis* and duke of an unspecified province;

he became

– *proedros, protonobelissimos*, and duke of Edessa after 1077;

finally, he was *sebastos* and duke of Edessa between 1081 and 1083.

According to Alexios Savvides, Basil Apokapes had been transferred from Armenia because he had become dangerously popular there, and Emperor Constantine X was afraid of a mutiny in that part of the Empire.[89] This is of course possible, but Savvides is wrong when writing that Apokapes came to Paradunavon in 1059. Constantine X became emperor in 1059, but when Theodoulos wrote his will Isaac I Comnenos was still on the throne, as mentioned in the eschatocol.[90] If Apokapes came to Paradunavon in 1059 or earlier, the emperor sending him there must have been Isaac. But Matthew of Edessa makes it clear that Apokapes was sent to the Danube frontier in the circumstances surrounding the invasion of the Oghuz. In this case, the emperor in question was Constantine X. In 1065, relations between the Byzantine administration and the Armenian aristocrats from Cappadocia were tense, because the emperor has begun persecuting those who refused to embrace Chalcedonian orthodoxy.[91] Given his military prestige, Basil Apokapes was a potential leader of an Armenian rebellion. This may indeed explain why troops from distant Armenia were dispatched to the Danube, precisely at a moment when the Seljuk threat required their presence in the East. The emperor's decision proved to be a major mistake of strategy, as the eastern frontier was deprived of key forces, while the war on the Danube was a complete failure. In any case, Basil Apokapes was not duke of Paradunavon in 1065. He was sent to the Danube to assist the commander of the province, Nikephoros Botaneiates. Basil Apokapes was only the duke of an army corps (*tagma*) sent as reinforcement to the province Paradunavon. His title of duke appears therefore on his seals without the name of any province.[92]

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89 Savvides 1991–1992, 100–101.
90 Lemerle 1977, 40.
91 Dédéyan 1975, 105–109.
92 Similar conclusions in Jordanov 1986, 123–127; Stepanenko 1994, 27–34; Šandrovskaja 1994, 158–160; Jordanov 2003 a, 43–44; Jordanov 2006, 57–59.

A seal discovered at Constantinople belongs to a certain Βασιλείου ἐκ προσώπου τοῦ Παραδούναβου. Ion Barnea thought that dignitary to be Basil Apokapes, who had been sent to Paradunavon as a deputy of the commander of the theme.[93] The title *ek prosopou* refers indeed to a deputy, but nothing indicates this to be Basil Apokapes. Vasile Mărculeţ also thought that Basil Apokapes had been sent as a deputy for an unknown duke of Paradunavon in 1059, being transferred from Vaspurakan,[94] but apparently did not know that Barnea's identification of Basil *ek prosopou* with Basil Apokapes was just a supposition.[95] The seal from Constantinople is important for this book only because it mentions yet another rank in the organization of the province. It does not belong to Basil Apokapes.

The account of the two dukes in Paradunavon in Michael Attaliates, the continuator of Skylitzes, and Zonaras may thus be understood only as a reference to Nikephoros Botaneiates as duke the theme of Paradunavon in 1065. Between October 1061 and February 1063, he had been duke of Thessaloniki, and after Paradunavon, he became duke of Cyprus, between 1065 and 1067. He must therefore have been duke of Paradunavon between 1063 and 1065.[96] If, on the other hand, there was only one duke of Paradunavon in 1065, the theory about the division of the province in 1059 is false. The only change taking place in that year consisted in the introduction of the official name Paradunavon for the province extending to west all the way to Vidin. Some have viewed Romanos Diogenes's 1067 title of duke of Serdica as proof for the split of Paradunavon, since he was the supposed commander of the Western Paradunavon. After being appointed duke of Serdica in 1066 by Emperor Constantine X, Romanos Diogenes won a victory against the Pechenegs.[97] He was not duke of the Bulgarian theme, as that office was occupied between 1066 and 1067 by Andronikos Philokales. The office of duke of Serdica does not concern the command over that city. Apparently, Serdica was in 1067 the center

[93] Zacos 1984, 424, nr. 956; Barnea 1986, 270, nr. 3.

[94] Mărculeţ 2008, 194–195; Mărculeţ 2009, 171.

[95] Božilov 2008, 97 does not identify him with Basil Apokapes.

[96] For these stages of the career of Nikephoros Botaneiates, see: Zacos, Veglery 1972, 1464–1465; Cheynet 1983, 461–462; Cheynet 1985, 187, 192; Oikonomides, N. 1986 b, 89–90, nr. 91, 92; Kühn 1991, 178, 212–213, 241; Karagiorgou 2008, 111–116, 128–129; Valeriev 2010, 425–427.

[97] Zonaras, XVIII, 10.12 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 684). See also Tăpkova-Zaimova 1973, 107 who argued that Romanos Diogenes was the duke of a theme based in Serdica. Dančeva-Vassileva 2004, 24 mentioned the appointment of Romanos Diogenes as duke of Serdica in order to battle the Pechenegs who had settled in that area. He was "strategos of the army of the city and of the region".

of a new military and administrative unit,[98] but there is no proof that that unit extended to the north as far as the Danube. On the contrary, the relationship between Romanos Diogenes and Nikulitzas, who was *strategos* of Larissa at the same time, strongly suggests that the new province extended to the south.[99] It is possible that parts of the theme of Bulgaria were re-shuffled in 1059 to form a separate province based on Serdica, as a measure against Hungary. The appointment of a new duke certainly meant a larger number of troops in the region.

In conclusion, Isaac I Comnenos did not divide the theme of Paradunavon. He only detached a part of the Bulgarian theme to create the theme of Serdica along the Morava valley, between Niš and Philippopolis.

Following Nikephoros Botaneiates, a new *katepano* of Paradunavon was appointed at some point after 1065—Michael, who had the title of *vestarches*. The first known seal of a man with that title, which is now in the Zacos collection, was ascribed either to Michael, son of Anastasios, who ruled the Danube region in 1045–1047,[100] or to the general Michael Dokeianos, who was killed by the Pechenegs in 1050.[101] Recently, however, two more seals have been published, one discovered during excavations in Pliska, the other from a private collection from Varna.[102] The title of *vestarches* does not fit in the *cursus* of Michael son of Anastasios, who is mentioned by Skylitzes as *patrikios* in 1047 and as *magistros* in 1057.[103] This was therefore a different person, somebody who occupied the office at a time when *katepanoi* were typically given the rank of *vestarches*. Nothing is known about the duration of his term, and it is even sure whether or not he came immediately after Nikephoros Botaneiates.[104]

Another commander was *katepano* Symeon, a *vestis*. Three seals with that title were found in Constantinople, Garvăn and Preslav, respectively. This *katepano* of Paradunavon must be the same as Symeon, *vestarches* and *katepano* of Adrianople and Mesembria, mentioned on seals dated to the

98 Diaconu 1970, 95–97.

99 Kekaumenos, 183 (ed. Spadaro, 220/221); Diaconu 1970, 96. Şesan 1978, 49 believed the theme of Serdica to have extended as far as Vidin in the early 12th century, given that its duke fought against the Cumans in that region in 1114. However, it is more probable that that region was under the duke of Niš, an interpretation to which I will return below.

100 Zacos 1984, 300, nr. 602; Barnea 1986, 269–270, nr. 2; Diaconu 1992 b, 326–327; Madgearu 1999 a, 424.

101 Stephenson 2000, 94; Stephenson 2003, 115. Accepted by Mărculeţ 2008, 184–188, who considers that Michael the son of Anastasios was followed by Michael Dokeianos.

102 Ivanov 2008, 140–141, nr. 7; Jordanov 2009, 465, nr. 1378–1379.

103 Jordanov 1993, 143; Jordanov 2003 b, 64–65, 71; Božilov 2008, 96 (dated after 1072).

104 Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 182 places his term between 1060 and 1070.

1060s or 1070s.[105] The katepanate of Mesembria was established as a shield against the rebels from Paradunavon, namely after 1072 (see below). Symeon became *vestarches* during or after his term in Paradunavon. The conclusion is that Symeon could be placed as *katepano* in Paradunavon between the years 1065 and 1072, before the appointment of *katepano* Nestor.[106] Nicolae Bănescu thought Symeon to have been *katepano* during the third decade of the 11th century, and treated him as Emperor Romanos III's brother-in-law.[107] Later archaeological finds gave the impression that he was right about the chronology. The seal from Garvăn was found in the filling of grave 46 from the cemetery around the chapel. Ion Barnea dated the grave between the middle of the 11th century and the middle of the 12th century.[108] In this view, the seal came from the underlying layers excavated for the grave pit. However, the chronology of the cemetery in question is different from that initially advanced by Ion Barnea and Eugen Comşa. The graves are most certainly not of the same date with the adjacent chapel, which was most likely erected just after 971. In fact the cemetery belongs to the last phase of occupation on the site, which is dated to the 13th–14th centuries.[109] The archaeological context of the Garvăn seal is therefore in contradiction with Bănescu's idea and dating.

Nine identical seals of Constantine Theodorokanos were found on different sites in the southeastern part of Paradunavon (Preslav, Silistra, Păcuiul lui Soare and other points). The rank and office of Constantine Theodorokanos are not specified, but he was identified with a *proedros* mentioned in the sources as having been arrested in 1077 or 1078 by the usurper Nikephoros Bryennios. Petre Diaconu believed Theodorokanos to have been the commander of Paradunavon, and explained that the mention of his office was not needed as locals knew him well.[110] If indeed he was *katepano* of Paradunavon, he must have been in office between 1065 and 1072, but other three commanders are mentioned at that same time.

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[105] Ştefan, Barnea 1967, 332–334; Barnea 1980, 271–273; Jordanov 1993, 110, nr. 195–196, 144, nr. 289; Jordanov, Tăpkova-Zaimova 1988, 124; Stephenson 2000, 94; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 182; Jordanov 2003 a, 137–138, nr. 58. 3; Jordanov 2003 b, 70; Jordanov 2009, 401–402, nr. 1109–1110, 464–465, nr. 1377.

[106] The same date at Božilov 2008, 96.

[107] Bănescu 1946, 70–71. Followed by Stănescu 1968 b, 46; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 93–94; Mărculeţ 2005, 60.

[108] Ştefan, Barnea 1967, 332–334.

[109] See Diaconu 1969 a, 49 (the chapel); Diaconu 1978, 129 (the cemetery). The necropolis is published by Ştefan, Barnea 1967, 367–373.

[110] Diaconu 1992 c, 359–361; Jordanov 1993, 193–194, nr. 402–403; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 183; Jordanov 2006, 155–156, nr. 229–236.

Because the seals of Constantine Theodorokanos have been found within the area most affected by the rebellion against Michael VII, his office of commander of Paradunavon must pre-date that event. However, there is no proof that he truly had that position, and only the discovery of new seals specifying his title could clarify this problem.

The rebellion mentioned above was the result of the financial policies introduced by Nikephoritzes, Emperor Michael VII Dukas' *parakoimonenon* (minister), who established a state monopoly over the wheat trade in the capital, only to see prices going up. As his goald was apparently to stock food in the provinces, the people from the cities of Paradunavon rose up in rebellion. They were also affected by Nikephoritzes' decision to cease any cash payments to them, which had until then been crucial in securing the peace in the region. Paul Stephenson has noted that Nikephoritzes's ultimate goal may have been to reform the economic relations with Paradunavon by means of a strict control of the local markets, similar to that in the capital, and of a substitution of stipends from the central government with local resources.[111] This, on the other hand, rhymes well with the notion of the security of Paradunavon preserved by means of gifts and bribes to the Pechenegs, as opposed to costly military operations. On the other hand, the continuator of Skylitzes explains that the *stratiotai* were unhappy with their exclusion from the administration of the theme (διοίκησις). This may refer to a shift of power in favor of civilian aristocrats in towns, the same class that had lost previous financial privileges. In 1072, the citizens of Dristra accepted as their ruler a Pecheneg chief named Tatrys or Tatós (called ἐξάρχον by Attaliates), who had inherited the autonomy granted by Emperor Constantine IX in 1053 to the Pechenegs (see chapter III. 2). Attaliates mentions that the inhabitants of Dristra gave to the Pecheneg ruler the control of the frontier (τὴν ἐξουσίαν τῆς ἄκρας).[112] Nicolae Iorga and Nicolae Bănescu strove to demonstrate that those events represented the first Romanian state in history,[113] while other historians excluded any participation of the Romanian population.[114]

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111 Stephenson 2000, 99–100.

112 Skylitzes Continuatus, 166; Attaliates, ed. Bekker, 204–205 (ed. Pérez Martín, 150); Zonaras, XVIII, 7.3–4 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 713). The word ἄκρα has two meanings: "hill-top fortress" and "border, frontier" (from the second one derives ἀκρίτες, frontier guard). Although Anna Comnena, VII, 3.3 (transl. Sewter, 193) wrote about two *akropoleis* in Dristra, the context of the sentence requires this translation made by Pérez Martín.

113 Iorga 1920, 33–46; Bănescu 1922, 287–310; Iorga 1937, 82–90.

114 For instance: Mutafčiev 1932, 236–259; Gyóni 1943–1944, 83–188; Tăpkova-Zaimova 1980, 332–335.

The involvement of the Romanian population in the rebellion led by Tatós results from a remark of Michael the Syrian, Patriarch of Antioch (1126–1199), who in his chronicle mentions that Alexios I Comnenos, at the beginning of his reign, "by his wisdom has freed their cities [of the Greeks] from the Franks, Cumans, Serbs and Vlachs (*Balakaye*)". As Victor Spinei has demonstrated, *Balakaye* are without any doubt the Romanians, and the context concerns the conflict against the Pechenegs from Paradunavon, two decades after the beginning of the rebellion.[115] This means that the rebellion of 1072 was a multiethnic affair involving the Pechenegs, but also Greeks, Bulgarians and Romanians. Contrary to Iorga's beliefs, the name *Tatós* has no relation with the Romanian *Tatu*, and is most obviously a Turkic name, with multiple analogies in the Turkic languages.[116] Tátos's other name was *Chalis*, a word quite similar to *Chalisi*, the Turkic Muslim group mentioned by John Kinnamos as having been settled between the Danube and the Sava.[117] The rebellion of 1072 was therefore no "national" movement, but instead was no different from other centrifugal developments taking place in the 11th century in the Balkans.[118] Different now is the strong military position of the Pechenegs, who were thus able to hijack the movement for their own interests.[119]

Emperor Michael VII Dukas sent to Dristra a man from his entourage, the *vestarches* Nestor, and appointed him as the new *katepano* of Paradunavon, with the mission to restore the imperial authority. Nestor was escorted by some citizens from Dristra who promised they would help him regain control of the city. Those people must have been members of a faction in the city which had remained loyal to the emperor. According to Attaliates, Nestor was a former *doulos* of the emperor's father, and of Illyrian descent.[120] The title *doulos* is confirmed by four seals, two of are from Silistra and another from Bolyarovo (Elkhovo region).[121] Both have the legend τῷ ἀν(θρώπ)ῳ ἄνακτο(ς) Δούκα. The meaning is "the man of the

[115] Michael the Syrian, XV.12 (ed. Chabot, 204); Spinei 2009, 119.

[116] Bogrea 1971, 49–50; Drăganu 1933, 573–575; Necşulescu 1937, 135–141, 148–150. Moreover, that Tátos was a Pecheneg is explicitly mentioned by both Attaliates and Zonaras.

[117] Kinnamos, III, 8; V, 16 (transl. Brand, 86, 186); Bogrea 1971, 35; Stephenson 2000, 192, 225.

[118] Madgearu 2006, 213–221.

[119] Necşulescu 1937, 122–151; Diaconu 1970, 100–116; Tanaşoca 1973, 64; Malamut 1995, 130–131; Spinei 2009, 119.

[120] Skylitzes Continuatus, 166; Attaliates, ed. Bekker, 205 (ed. Pérez Martín, 151); Zonaras, XVIII, 7.3–4 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 713).

[121] Oikonomides 1986 b, 93–94, nr. 95; Jordanov 1992 b, 238–239, nr. 14–15; Jordanov 2006, 306–308, nr. 521–522; Jordanov 2009, 652, nr. 2005–2007.

master Dukas" (ἄναξ is "lord", and it was used in that sense to refer to an emperor, a king, but also to the master of a house). The word ἄνθροπος denotes the condition of *doulos* of the emperor. It is important to note that the same phrase (ἄνθροπος αυτοῦ) was employed by Anna Comnena to refer to the Bohemond of Taranto as her father, Emperor Alexios' liegeman.[122] On the other hand, according to the same Attaliates, Nestor was οἰκειοτάτως. He therefore belonged to the group of *oikeioi*, the entourage of the emperor, *oikeios* being identical with *doulos*. An *oikeiotatos* was on the highest position in the *oikos* (the imperial court), almost at the same level as the emperor's kinsmen.[123] Because the archaic name "Illyrian" could refer only to Serbs or to Vlachs,[124] Nestor must have been a formerly local ruler from Dioclea or Macedonia, who had offered his territory to Constantine X, or an aristocrat who had entered the imperial service. According to the continuator of Skylitzes, Nikephoritzes had previously confiscated his wealth. Revenge must therefore have been on his mind, when, according to Attaliates, he joined the rebels, because of being of the same origin (τῷ ὁμοτίμῳ τοῦ γένους). Some have interpreted this passage as proof that Nestor was Bulgarian, under the assumption that Dristra was inhabited only by Bulgarians.[125] However, the Byzantine author and other like him in Constantinople regarded people both from the Danube regions and from Illyria as not quite Byzantine, either "half-" or even "under-Byzantines," or "inside foreigners."[126] For Attaliates, therefore, Nestor shared the same inferior condition with the inhabitants of the city, who like him were on the periphery of the civilized world, although not necessarily "Illyrian" *stricto sensu*.

The discovery of two seals of Nestor in Silistra shows that prior to his joining the rebels, he had been in contact with them or with someone in the city. Shortly after his appointment, he must have been based elsewhere in Paradunavon, for he would not othwerise have used the phrase "man of the emperor" on his seal. In other words, it took some time between his

122 Ferluga 1976, 407.

123 Ferluga 1976, 242; Cheynet 1990, 287–301; Stephenson 2000, 123–129.

124 For the idea that Nestor was Vlach, see Diaconu 1970, 103–104; Angold 1984, 98. The Bulgarian origin of Nestor, which was advocated by Zlatarski, Mutafčiev, and other Bulgarian historians, is contradicted by the fact that the archaic word employed for Bulgarians in the Byzantine sources was "Mysian," not "Illyrian." In Attaliates' work, *Illyrikon* refers to Macedonia. Therefore, as Petre Diaconu pointed out, the use of the archaic word *Illyrian* in reference to a Vlach is not impossible.

125 Tăpkova-Zaimova 1974, 672–673; Tăpkova-Zaimova 1980, 334.

126 Malamut 1995, 131.

correspondence sealed with seals mentioning that phrase and his defection to the rebels's side. Where was Nestor, when writing his letters? He may have been in Isaccea or some other city in Paradunavon not affected, at least initially, by the rebellion of 1072. Upon his arrival to Dristra, Nestor realized that he could not appease the rebels. In control of the situation was the Pecheneg chieftain Tatós. Under such circumstances, Nestor had no choice but to put himself at the head of the rebellion against the emperor and his personal enemy, Nikephoritzes. It is possible that he established contact with the Bulgarian and Serbian rebels from the theme of Bulgaria, who are also mentioned in 1072.[127] Nestor appears to have shared power with Tatós and led a Pecheneg army against Constantinople in 1075. There were not enough troops in the capital to march against the Pechenegs, but the march was unexpectedly interrupted when Nestor learned Tatós had sent men to kill him. It is not altogether clear whether this is what happened or simply a rumor, possibly spread by someone in the service of the emperor. In any case, Nestor and his men returned to Paradunavon (with plenty of prisoners and booty from Macedonia and Thrace), and nothing is known about him after that.[128]

For some years, the northern part of Dobrudja remained under the authority of the empire. A provincial mint, in which coins were cast, instead of being struck, operated in Isaccea until 1080. Cast coins do not commonly appear in southern Dobrudja. During Michael VII's reign, the mint produced only issues with his name, which implies that Isaccea was not in the hands of the rebels. On the other hand, continuous relations with the capital result from finds of coins struck in the Constantinopolitan mint on behalf of Nikephoros III Botaneiates (1078–1081), which appear in greater numbers in northern Dobrudja than locally produced, cast coins.[129] If the office of *katepano* of Paradunavon was still in existence between 1072 and 1081, then his residence could have been only in Isaccea. However, no commander is so far known from any seal of a duke or a katepano, which could be dated between 1072 and 1081. On the other hand, the authority of whoever was running the northern part of Dobrudja still loyal to the

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[127] Sacerdoţeanu 1939–1940, 89–91; Ferluga 1976, 81–84; Fine 1991, 213–214; Stephenson 2000, 141–143.

[128] Skylitzes Continuatus, 166; Attaliates, ed. Bekker, 208–209 (ed. Pérez Martín, 152–154); Zonaras, XVIII, 7.4–6 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 713). For the events from Paradunavon in 1072–1091, see Gyóni 1944, 83–188; Stănescu 1966, 56–65; Tanaşoca 1973, 61–82; Malamut 1995, 129–141; Stephenson 2000, 98–102; Madgearu 2003 a, 49–56; Spinei 2006, 199–204.

[129] Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1983, 261–270; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1997, 119–149; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 137–147; Mănucu-Adameşteanu, Poll 2006, 443–444; Curta 2006, 299.

central administration must have been quite limited, because it is certain that after 1078, the rebellion spread to some northern cities as well. A seal of Nikephoros Basilakios, duke of Dyrrachion, was found in Nufăru.[130] He rose in rebellion against Nikephoros III Botaneiates in that same year (1078) and even called the Pechenegs for assistance.[131] The fortress in Nufăru must have been a gateway to the Pecheneg lands, and it certainly was one of the most important centers in northern Paradunavon.

A new katepanate was created to the south from the territory controlled by the rebels, in Mesembria. Two individuals are mentioned as commander of the new administrative unit: Symeon (the former *katepano* of Paradunavon) and Valatzertes (Valtzar, the son of the Pecheneg chief Kegen, who was in Byzantine military service, much like his father).[132] Six *ek prosopou* (deputy commanders) of the katepanate of Mesembria are also known: Andronikos, Theodore, John, Leo, Kyriakos and Himerios Solomon.[133] Meanwhile, the military command of northern Paradunavon after 1087 was in the hands of Gregory Mavrokatakalon. His seals found in Silistra (4 specimens), Preslav (4 specimens), Isaccea (2 specimens), Vetren and Oltina (one specimen each) describe him as *patrikios, anthypatos* and *katepano*, without any specific province. This may imply that he was regarded as a commander of the entire theme of Paradunavon.[134] Gregory Mavrokatakalon twice appears in Anna Comnena's biography of her father as Alexios' adviser during the campaign against the Pechenegs in the summer of 1087, which will be discussed in chapter III. 2.[135] The title of *anthypatos* and the office of *katepano* are undoubtedly indication

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[130] Barnea 1993 a, 61–65, nr. 9.

[131] Attaliates, ed. Bekker, 298 (ed. Pérez Martín, 213); Zonaras, XVIII, 19.17 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 723); Malamut 1995, 133.

[132] Skylitzes, *Constantine Monomachos*, 21 (ed. Thurn, 465; transl. Flusin, 385; transl. Wortley, 435).

[133] Seibt 1978, 299; Jordanov 1990, 110; Nesbitt, Oikonomides 1991, 173; Jordanov 1993, 193; Seibt 2004, 258–259; Jordanov 2003 a, 40, nr. 10.3, 121, 122–123, nr. 47. 5; Jordanov 2009, 405, nr. 1124, 1125, 45, nr. 1346. Treadgold 1995, 37, note 51 has maintained without any reason that the katepanate came into existence soon after 1000.

[134] I first advanced this interpretation in Madgearu 1999 a, 430, before the discovery of the seal of Oltina, published by Chiriac 2001, 113–121 (who endorsed my point of view). Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 184; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 c, 110 and Mărculeţ 2005, 74 rejected the idea. The seals from Bulgaria are published by Jordanov 1981, 94–97; Jordanov 1993, 162–163, nr. 328–330; Jordanov 2006, 280–282, nr. 442–451; Jordanov, Žekova 2007, 124, nr. 323, Jordanov 2009, 486–487, nr. 1454–1461, 501–502, nr.1527–1527A, and those from Isaccea by Barnea 1990, 323, nr. 10; Barnea 1997, 357. Another seal from an unknown location is in Paul Stephenon's personal collection.

[135] Anna Comnena, VII, 2.3; 3.4 (transl. Sewter, 219, 223); Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 148–149; Jordanov 1981, 96–97.

that he was the commander of a province. Ivan Jordanov believed however that Mavrokatakalon had no such position, as no province name is mentioned.[136] Nonetheless, there are examples of dukes of specific provinces, whose seals do not mention the names of those provinces, i.e., the seal of the *katepano* of Bulgaria, Andronikos Philokales, which was published by Ivan Jordanov himself.[137] Another seal of Gregory Mavrokatakalon as *patrikios* and *strategos* was found in Preslav, but it is certainly earlier than 1081 and has no relation with the command of Paradunavon.[138] Two other seals from Isaccea without titles are also dated too before Gregory Mavrokatakalon's promotion as *katepano*. They are still important because they indicate the continuity of the military organization in Isaccea between 1078 and 1081, when Gregory Mavrokatakalon was on the staff of Alexios I Comnenos, who was at that time the commander of the western army.[139] Gregory Mavrokatakalon was appointed *katepano* of Paradunavon after the offensive of 1087, in which he served on the emperor's side. Knowing that Isaccea was under imperial control between 1087 and 1091, given that a seal has been found there of Adrian—Emperor Alexios's brother and the new commander of the western army[140]—it is possible that Gregory Mavrokatakalon was a *katepano* residing in Isaccea. The messages sent to Dristra and Oltina were perhaps intended to convince the rebels to take Emperor Alexios's side, after the failed siege of Dristra (see chapter III. 2).

The last known duke of the Paradunavon theme was the *proedros* Leo Nikerites. He had already been appointed to that office in May 1091, when Alexios I Comnenos sent somebody in exile in that province.[141] The beginning and the end of his term are unknown, but he may have been demoted after the Cuman invasion of 1095.[142] Two seals of Leo Nikerites have been found in Isaccea and Păcuiul lui Soare.[143]

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136 Jordanov 1981, 97.

137 Jordanov 1993, 160–161, nr. 323.

138 Jordanov 1982 b, 96; Jordanov 1993, 169, nr. 354; Jordanov 2006, 280, nr. 441.

139 Barnea 1997, 357.

140 Barnea 1986, 273; Barnea 1997, 357. The message attested by this seal was most likely related to the operations launched by Alexios I for the recovery of Paradunavon.

141 Anna Comnena, VIII, 9.7 (transl. Sewter, 268).

142 For this attack, see chapter III. 2.

143 Bănescu 1946, 93–95; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 153; Jordanov 1995, 213–214; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 184–185; Jordanov 2003 b, 67–68; Curta 2006, 302. The seals are published by Barnea 1986, 272–273, nr. 5 and Diaconu 1992 a, 181–182. Other seals of Leon Nikerites as *vestarches* and *protoproedros* link him to Bulgaria, but not to Paradunavon, in

No duke or *katepano* of Paradunavon is known for the period after the Cuman attack of 1095, which of course does not necessarily mean that the province disappeared. The office of *katepano*, however, was most likely abolished as part of the military reform introduced by Alexios I Comnenos, whose purpose was a more effective defense with fewer forces. The alternative was a shorter and stronger line of defense, placed on the Stara Planina range, instead of the Danube. The territory between the Danube and the new line of defense remained under Byzantine administration until the Vlach-Bulgarian uprising of 1185–1186, but had no troops under the command of any duke or *katepano*.[144]

This re-shuffling of the defense mechanism in the region revived the importance of two ports, Mesembria and Anchialos, which were located next to the easternmost segment of the Stara Planina range. Besides the katepanate of Mesembria created during the secession of Paradunavon, a newly established military structure was also meant support the defense line on the Stara Planina range—the theme of Anchialos. That new theme was detached from Thrace by Alexios I Comnenos in 1087, and included the port towns of Anchialos, Mesembria, Sozopolis, and Develtos.[145] The rationale for the new theme seems to have been the same strategic concept as that applied by John Tzimiskes to the situation following the conquest of 971, when a strategy of Anchialos was created to enforce the defense of the western Black Sea coast against possible seaborne attacks by the Rus'. In 1087, there was of course another enemy, but the defense against the Pechenegs coming from north also required a naval force capable of moving on the Danube. It is no accident that within that same year, a fleet commanded by George Euphorbenos was sent to the Danube against the Pechenegs (see chapter III. 2). If the office of duke of Paradunavon was indeed abolished after 1095, then that would imply that no *tagmata* were stationed any more between the Danube and the Stara Planina Mountains, and that troops still garrisoned in some of the forts on the river were

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Jordanov 2006, 308–309. nr. 523–524; Jordanov, Žekova 2007, 64–65, nr. 138–139; Jordanov 2009, 163–164, nr. 400–401. Another one at Seibt 1995, 225–226.

144 Stănescu 1966, 65 believed that the absence of any mention in the sources indicates that the Paristrian theme was not restored, or that it existed only for a brief time under Alexios I. The establishment of another kind of military structure, the *kleisura*, should not in principle be excluded, but there is no evidence for that so far. The seal of a *kleisurarch* named Kalokyres Sarakinopoulos does not mention Paradunavon, as wrongly stated by Meško 2006, 130 (for this seal found in Pliska, see Jordanov 2006, 364, nr. 639; Jordanov 2009, 520, nr. 1602).

145 Ahrweiler 1966, 188; Nesbitt, Oikonomides 1991, 169; Kühn 1991, 168.

under the command of the duke of Anchialos. At any rate, the Danube province was not abandoned, only defended by fewer forces stationed in fewer towns.

At the end of this survey seeking to reconstruct the list of commanders of Dristra and Paradunavon, it is perhaps important to summarize the results as following:

Katepanate of Western Mesopotamia (971–after 1002):
Damian Dobromir, *patrikios* and *anthypatos*, duke of Thrace and Mesopotamia (around 1002)
Theme of Ioannoupolis (Preslav)—between 971 and 986:
Peter, *strategos* of Ioannoupolis, *basilikos protospatharios* (971–?)
Leo Sarakinopoulos, *strategos* of Thrace and Ioannoupolis, *basilikos protospatharios* (?–975)
Theophanes, *strategos* of Thrace and Ioannoupolis, *basilikos protospatharios* (975–986)
Staurakios, *strategos* of Thrace and Ioannoupolis, *basilikos protospatharios* (975–986)
Katepanate of Theodoroupolis (971):
Sisinios, *katepano*, *protospatharios* (971)
Theme of Dorostolon (972–975):
Leo Sarakinopoulos, *strategos* of Dorostolon, *protospatharios*
Arkadios, *strategos* of Dorostolon, *protospatharios*
Marianos, *strategos* of Dorostolon, *protospatharios*
Theme of Dristra (975–986, 1000–1018?):
Peter, *strategos* of Dristras, *protospatharios*
Basilakes, *strategos* of Dristras, *protospatharios*
David, *strategos* of Dristras, *protospatharios*
Theodore, *strategos* of Dristras, *primikerios*
Tzotzikios, *strategos* of Dorostolon, *patrikios*
Theme of Dristra or of the Paristrian cities (1018?–1059):
Katakalon Kekaumenos, *archon ton para ton Istron poleon* (*katepano* in two seals), *anthypatos*, next *vestis* (1042–1045)
Michael, son of Anastasios, *archon ton Paristrion poleon, patrikios* (1045–1047)
Constantine (. . .)polites, *katepano* of Dristra, *patrikios* (after 1047)
Leo Drymis, *katepano* of Dristra, *anthypatos*, *patrikios* (around 1050)
Romanos Diogenes, *archon ton peri ton Istron poleon*, *patrikios* (before and after 1053)

Theme of Paradunavon (1059–1095?):
Demetrios Katakalon, *katepano* of Paradunavon, *anthypatos*, *patrikios* (circa 1055–1062)
Theodore Pegonites, *katepano* of Paradunavon, *patrikios, anthypatos*, *vestis* (circa 1055–1062)
Nikephoros Botaneiates, *archon ton kata ton Istron poleon, magistros* (1062–1065)
Michael, katepano of Paradunavon, *vestarches* (inbetween 1065–1072)
Symeon, *katepano* of Paradunavon, *vestis* (inbetween 1065–1072)
Nestor, *katepano* of Paradunavon, *vestarches* (1072)
Gregory Mavrokatakalon, *katepano* of Paradunavon, *patrikios, anthypatos* (after 1087)
Leo Nikerites, *duke* of Paradunavon, *proedros* (1091–1095?).[146]

It is clear from this list that the first commander with the title of *katepano* (of the theme of Dristra) appears in 1042. Contemporary seals, however, have only the title, without the name of the province. By contrast, the title of *archon* appears only in the written sources, namely in the chronicles of Skylitzes and Attaliates. This was a title commonly used for rulers of autonomous regions on the periphery of the Empire,[147] although in the case of the Danube province such an autonomy is out of question. It may be that the chroniclers thought of that province as one inhabited by "mixobarbarians." In fact, Michael Attaliates employed the word *mixobarbaroi* in reference to the rebels of 1072, a usage interpreted as illustrating his scornful attitude towards that remote region on the frontier. Some, however, have taken the phrase to imply the mixed ethnicities of the population in the region,[148] but a careful study of Attaliates' vocabulary suggests otherwise. In Classical Antiquity, *mixobarbaroi* was used to describe the intermediary status of people "caught" between civilization and barbarism.[149] For educated authors such as Michael Attaliates

[146] The discovery of new seals and the publication of new studies dedicated to the military prosopography of the region considerably altered changed the list I have first proposed in Madgearu 1999 a, 423–431, which was also accepted in general lines by Meško 2006, 131–133.

[147] Ahrweiler 1966, 56–60.

[148] Attaliates, ed. Bekker, 205 (ed. Pérez Martín, 150); Bănescu 1946, 101; Diaconu 1970, 101; Bonarek 2007, 196–200.

[149] Stănescu 1965, 45–49; Stănescu 1974, 404; Tanaşoca 1973, 66–74; Tăpkova-Zaimova 1975 b, 615–616; Malamut 1995, 131.

or Anna Comnena (who also employed the phrase in reference to several individuals), the Danube rebels were indeed semi-barbarians, in sharp opposition to the order specific for true civilization, irrespective of their ethnicity. In this context, even the use of the word *archon* may be seen as a narrative strategy designed to shed a certain, negative light upon the peripheral province. This was of course literary licence, and had nothing to do with the official usage. In other words, the use of *archon* cannot be interpreted as evidence that the province was an "archontate."[150]

2. *The* Strategoi *as City Commanders in the Theme of Dristra/Paradunavon*

The army of a theme was made up of units called *turma*, each garrisoned in a different city. A seal found in Istanbul of John, turmarch of Paradunavon, was dated on iconographical grounds to the 1060s.[151] Two seals (one of them from Sofia) attest the existence of a turmach called Andronikos in Arachilava. That town has been identified with Orjakhovo (known in Antiquity as Appiaria).[152] However, doubts about that identification has also been raised when it turned out that the medieval fortress on that site cannot be dated earlier than the 13th century.[153]

The garrisons of the most important cities were under the command of *strategoi*.[154] The title was initially reserved for commanders of themes, but its meaning began to change in the early 11th century. The new *strategoi* of cities are attested in Paradunavon by seals and a few written sources. For example, Skylitzes mentions the capture of five *strategoi*—John Dermokaites, Bardas Petzes, Leo Chalkotubes, Constantine Pterotos and Michael Strabotrichares—by the Pechenegs in 1036,[155] but there is no mention of the cities in which they served as commanders. It is worth observing though that the capture of no less than five *strategoi* at the same time suggest a quite developed military organization in the cities along the Danube.

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[150] Mărculeţ 2011, 55–68.

[151] Zacos 1984, 275, nr. 530; Barnea 1986, 269; Jordanov 2003 b, 71.

[152] Seibt 2004, 255–256.

[153] Kuzev 1968, 29–34; Kuzev, Gjuzelev 1981, 120–124.

[154] Ahrweiler 1960, 40–41, 46–50, 90; Krsmanović 2008, 76–77.

[155] Skylitzes, *Michael IV the Paphlagonian*, 10 (ed. Thurn, 399; transl. Flusin, 330–331; transl. Wortley, 376). For the attack, see Bănescu 1946, 73–74; Diaconu 1977 a, 1897; Malamut 1995, 118–119. A seal of a Strabotricharites found near Preslav may be that of Michael Strabotrichares (Jordanov 2006, 382, nr. 671).

Preslav was no more the center of a theme after the reconquest of 1000. In that city resided a simple *strategos* (instead of a duke). The seals of three *strategoi* of Preslav have been found in the archive discovered on the site (the name of which was rendered as Περσθλαβα and Πραισθλαβας). First, Constantine Karantinos was the brother-in-law of Emperor Romanos III (1028–1034). Since it is known that he was duke of Antioch after 1030, he must have been appointed before that to the otherwise inferior office in Preslav. The term of the second *strategos*, Andronikos Dukas, could be placed in the 1030s, while that of the third *strategos*, John, could be dated only generally within the first half of the 11th century. He is known from seven seals found in Preslav and another from Silistra. All those *strategoi* were also *protospatharioi*.[156]

Pliska, the first capital of Bulgaria, was also the residence of a *strategos* until its destruction dated to the 1060s. The archaeological excavations carried out until 1999 have discovered 568 coins, the latest of which have been struck for Emperor Constantine X Dukas. A few specimens from 1075–1080 and 1092–1118 are not sufficient for supporting the idea that the town was rebuild after its destruction most likely during the invasion of the Oghuz in 1065 (see next chapter).[157] Before that, that a *strategos* resided in Pliska results from the seal of Philotheus Frangopoulos, *protospatharios* and *strategos*.[158]

Another *strategos* resided in Varna, but only for a shorter while, namely during the early conflicts in the 1050s with the Pechenegs in Paradunavon, which required an increased protection of the coastline. Only one *strategos* is known from Varna, namely Asoteos, *patrikios* and *anthypatos*, whose seal (and term) is dated to *ca.* 1064.[159] A *strategos* was in residence in Vetren, a fortress where the seals of three military commanders have been found: Tyrach, *protospatharios* and *eparchos*;[160] the *katepano* Romanos

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[156] Jordanov 1987 a, 93, 95; Jordanov 1993, 146–150, nr. 291–303; Jordanov 2000, 138, nr. 19; Jordanov 2003 a, 149–150, 152, nr. 63.2, 3, 6; Jordanov 2006, 137, nr. 192–195, 186, nr. 273–278; Jordanov, Žekova 2007, 121–122, nr. 316, 317; Božilov 2008, 95; Yotov 2008 a, 347; Jordanov 2009, 469–472, nr. 1393–1403A, 1407–1413.

[157] Jordanov 2000, 165.

[158] Jordanov 2003 a, 143, nr. 62. 1; Jordanov, Žekova 2007, 120, nr. 312; Jordanov 2009, 467, nr. 1384.

[159] Seibt 2004, 254; Jordanov 2003 a, 45; Kostova 2006, 589; Kostova 2008 a, 214–215; Jordanov 2009, 408, nr. 1134.

[160] Atanasov, Jordanov 1994, 41; Spinei 2006, 191. This is in fact the Pecheneg chieftain, who had entered the Byzantine military service upon his surrender (see chapter III. 2).

Diogenes;[161] and Gregory Mavrokatakalon.[162] By the same token, it would also be possible to claim that there were *strategoi* in both Garvăn and Krivina, given that both sites produced seals of *katepanoi* of Paradunavon (Symeon and Demetrios Katakalon, respectively). Similarly, because of several seals of commanders of other themes or of other officials have been found in Nufăru, the existence of an 11th-century *strategos* in that town is quite possible.[163] Finally, Isaccea was definitely one of the most important centers in Paradunavon, and must have had a *strategos.* The city was the temporary headquarters of the theme during the secession of Dristra in 1072–1091, and the discovery of many seals of high officials and even of those of the emperors Alexios I and Isaac II Angelos[164] suggests that a high-rank military commander resided in that city.

One of the most controversial issues regarding the local military organization in the theme of Paradunavon is the identification of Presthlavitza, a town known to have had a *strategos* from several seals discovered in Bulgaria or preserved now in various collections:

– Aetios, *protospatharios* and *strategos* of Presthlavitza (eight seals found in Preslav, one from Silistra, one from Topolovgrad-Melnitsa, one from the Sliven region, another one in the Dumbarton Oaks collection);[165]
– Leo Pegonites, *protospatharios* and *strategos* of Presthlavitza (eight seals from Preslav, one from Pliska, two from Silistra, one in the Dumbarton Oaks collection, and another in the Hermitage collection, all dated by the middle of the 11th century. The term of this *strategos* may have coincided with that of Theodore Pegonites as *katepano* of Paradunavon. Leo may have been Theodore's father);[166]

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[161] Atanasov, Jordanov 1994, 37.

[162] Jordanov 2006, 281.

[163] Duke Basil Apokapes (Barnea 1986, 270–271; Barnea 1987 a, 194); Basilakes, duke of Dyrrachion (Barnea 1993 a, 61–65); Constantine Anemas, *spatharos* and inspector of the Armeniakon theme (Barnea 1986, 272); George Spanopoulos, *vestarches* (Barnea 1997 b, 97–98); Constantine Kokkinobepheos, *protospatharios* and *krites* (Barnea 1983, 268–269); Clement, *vestarches* (Barnea 1996–1997, 190).

[164] Barnea 1997, 355–359.

[165] Diaconu 1987 b, 279; Nesbitt, Oikonomides 1991, 153, nr. 69.1; Jordanov 1993, 151–152, nr. 304–307; Frankopan 2001, 79; Jordanov 2003 a, 148–149, nr. 63.1; Jordanov, Žekova 2007, 121, nr. 315; Božilov 2008, 95; Jordanov 2009, 467–469, nr. 1385–1392, 497, nr. 1495–1502. Possible the same as Aetios, imperial *protospatharios* and *strategos*, without a city name (Jordanov 1993, 165–166, nr. 334–340; Jordanov, Žekova 2007, 126, nr. 327).

[166] Bănescu 1946, 41; Šandrovskaja 1982, 167; Oikonomides 1983, 1–2; Nesbitt, Oikonomides 1991, 179, nr. 78.4; Jordanov 1993, 153–154, nr. 309–310; Jordanov 2003 a, 152–153, nr. 63.7 (who thought he was the son of Theodore Pegonites); Jordanov 2006, 344–346, nr. 575–584;

– John Malesis, *patrikios* and *strategos* of Presthlavitza (one seal from Dervent, one from Preslav, one from Silistra);[167]
– John Maleas, *protospatharios* and *strategos* of Presthlavitza, different from the previous individual, according to the last studies on his two seals found int Preslav;[168]
– Melias, *protospatharios* and *strategos* of Presthlavitza (three seals from Preslav);[169]
– Omalis, *protospatharios* and *strategos* of Presthlavitza (one seal from Preslav);[170]

Presthlavitza is also mentioned on seals of three *kommerkiarioi* (custom officials)—Sergios, John, and Eustratios Romanos.[171]

There are two conflicting points of view regarding the location of Presthlavitza. One of them sees that as a place different from Preslav, and interprets the suffix *-itza* as a diminutive, thus equating Presthlavitza with Little Preslav, a fortress mentioned only once in the account of the campaign of 1000.[172] According to Petre Diaconu, since such pairs of names were given to neighboring places, Little Preslav must be somewhere in the vicinity of Preslav.[173] This is indeed correct, for the fortress is mentioned in a description of a trip to Preslav, but the location is still unknown. According to the second opinion, Presthlavitza is the Grecized version of

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Jordanov, Žekova 2007, 122, nr. 318; Wassiliou-Seibt 2008, 134–135; Božilov 2008, 95; Wassiliou-Seibt 2009, 306–307, nr. 4; Jordanov 2009, 472, nr. 1414–1419, 510–511, nr. 1560–1565. He was not a *strategos* of a small province called Preslav detached from the theme of Dristra, as wrongly maintained by Mărculeţ 2005, 50; Mărculeţ 2005–2006, 312.

[167] Oikonomides 1983, 2; Diaconu 1987 b, 279; Jordanov 1992 b, 232, nr. 5; Jordanov 1993, 171–172, nr. 359; Diaconu 1994 b, 355–356; Jordanov 2003 a, 151, nr. 63.5; Jordanov 2006, 268–269, nr. 412–413; Božilov 2008, 95; Kostova 2008 a, 215; Jordanov 2009, 470–471, nr. 1406, 506, nr. 1546. Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 176 was wrong when making John Malesis the commander of the province in 1030–1040. As *strategos*, in that period he could have been only a city commander. Meško 2006, 132 has him also as a commander of Paradunavon.

[168] Jordanov 1993, 152–153, nr. 308, 232, nr. 308 a; Jordanov 2003 a, 151, nr. 63.4; Jordanov 2006, 267–268, nr. 267; Jordanov 2009, 470, nr. 1404–1405.

[169] Jordanov 1993, 154, nr. 311; Jordanov 2003 a, 154, nr. 63.9; Božilov 2008, 95; Jordanov 2009, 473, nr. 1421–1422; Jordanov 2011 b, 202.

[170] Jordanov 1993, 154–155, nr. 312; Jordanov 2003 a, 154, nr. 63.8; Božilov 2008, 95; Jordanov 2009, 473, nr. 1420.

[171] Oikonomides 1983, 2–4; Nesbitt, Oikonomides 1991, 178–179, nr. 78.1–3; Jordanov 1993, 150.

[172] Šandrovskaja 1982, 168; Oikonomides 1983, 4–9; Nesbitt, Oikonomides 1991, 178–179; Tăpkova-Zaimova 1993, 97; Wasilewski 1995, 199–200.

[173] Năsturel 1965, 30–36 has supported its location in Păcuiul lui Soare. Stănescu 1970, 124 agrees that Little Preslav must have been somewhere in the vicinity of Preslav.

the name of the capital of capital of Bulgaria, now given a feminine name.[174] In other words, Presthlavitza is in fact Preslav. Scholars on both sides seem to agree that Presthlavitza is the same as Pereiaslavetz mentioned in the Russian Primary Chronicle as the town in which Svyatoslav wanted to settle upon conquering the Danube region in 968 (see chapter I). Because the Danube appears in that account in relation to Pereiaslavetz, some have argued that its location must be sought on the southern bank of the river, possibly at Nufăru (in northern Dobrudja, on the Saint George branch of the Danube), the old name of which until the early 20th century was *Prislav* or *Prislava*. Moreover, on 14th- to 16th-century maps, that same place appears as *Proslavitza.*[175] Those rejecting the identification of Presthlavitza with Preslav believe that Prislav/Nufăru was indeed Pereiaslavetz or Presthlavitza.[176] The discovery in Nufăru of a Byzantine fort dated to the 10th–11th centuries has only give more fuel to that intepretation. Its main opponent, Petre Diaconu, believed that the phrase "na Dunaj" in the text of the Russian Primary Chronicle should not be taken at face value, since, according to him the Danube was only regarded as a landmark for a larger area through which the river flows. The comparison between Byzantine and Rus' sources led Diaconu to the conclusion that Svyatoslav's residence was in Preslav. That the Rus' chronicler chose Pereiaslavetz as a name for what was otherwise Preslav may have been the result of confusion with the Rus' town Pereiaslavl' (so Diaconu). No other Preslav is mentioned in the Russian Primary Chronicle, which means that Pereiaslavetz must be the name of the Bulgarian capital.[177] Petre Năsturel also noted that it was quite normal for Svyatoslav to chose as his residence, even if temporary, the very capital city of the Bulgarian ruler whom he had just defeated, and that, on the other hand, a residence on the southern bank of the Danube would have exposed to Pecheneg attacks.[178] Diaconu was therefore right

[174] Diaconu 1987 b, 279–293. See also Jordanov 1983, 105.

[175] Grămadă 1930, 241–242; Cihodaru 1978–1979, 286–288; Todorova 1986, 64; Baraschi 1991, 53–65.

[176] Brătianu 1942, 149; Cihodaru 1968, 225–227; Cihodaru 1978–1979, 286–288; Oikonomides 1983, 7–9; Nesbitt, Oikonomides 1991, 178; Perkhavko 1994, 278–290; Wasilewski 1995, 200; Hanak 1995, 142–144; Franklin, Shepard 1996, 147; Soustal 1997, 122; Pintescu 1999, 72; Stephenson 2000, 56–57; Meško 2006, 131; Strässle 2006, 110, 169; Yotov 2007, 323. Different points of view at Bromberg 1937, 459 (Hârşova) Stokes 1962, 474–475 (Garvăn-Dinogetia). Busetto 1996, 13 believes that Presthlavitza was Dristra, but that is impossible.

[177] Diaconu 1965 a, 37–43; Diaconu 1987 b, 284–286.

[178] Năsturel 1965, 25.

in identifying Pereiaslavetz with Preslav, the former being the name given by the Rus' chronicler to the Bulgarian capital.[179]

The archaeological excavations in Nufăru did not offer any support to the idea that that was Svyatoslav's residence, given that the ramparts of the fort were erected on top of an earlier, non-fortified settlement, which has been dated before 971. By the time Svyatoslav was in Bulgaria, therefore, this was just a village, not an important town. Gold coins struck between 945 and 959 for Constantine VII and Romanos II were found in secondary positions, namely in sunken-floored buildings dated after 971.[180] Those coins have been in circulation for a few decades before their deposition.

If Pereiaslavetz was the Rus' name for Preslav, then where was Presthlavitza, the residence of several *strategoi* mentioned in the 11th century? In other words, was Pereiaslavetz the same as Presthlavitza? There are again three possibilities: Preslav, Little Preslav, or some other city which was not in the hinterland of Preslav. Petre Diaconu firmly believed that Presthlavitza was Preslav, as he saw the former as the feminine form of the latter name. In his opinion, which I have shared in some previous studies,[181] the *strategoi* of Presthlavitza were commanders of Preslav when the city was no more the residence of a theme. I initially thought that *kommerkiarioi* would not appear in Preslav when that town was on the border of the empire, during the secession of Paradunavon in 1072–1091. Instead, their presence makes more sense somewhere on the Danube, in a point where trade was sufficiently active to be taxed, namely in a city which was also the residence of a *strategos*. Trans-Danubian trade implies the use of a ford. Besides, that office cannot be associated with anything close to Dristra, which had its own *kommerkiarioi*.[182]

Rossina Kostova's idea that Presthlavitza was in Isaccea (the ancient Noviodunum)[183] is consistent with those conditions, but there is another solution which is perhaps even better, given the survival of the name: Nufăru. During the 11th century, that was definitely an important fort and

[179] Atanasov 1994, 116 rejected the identification of Pereiaslavetz with Nufăru.
[180] Damian 1995, 217; Damian, Andonie, Vasile 2000, 67; Damian et alii 2003 b, 73.
[181] Madgearu 1999 a, 429; Madgearu 2003 a, 53.
[182] Three *kommerkiarioi* of Dristra are known: Andronikos (*protospatharios*), Dionysios (*spatharocandidatos*) and John Spondyles. See Seibt 1978, 306, nr. 9; Nesbitt Oikonomides 1991, 151, nr. 65.2; Jordanov 2002, 84, nr. 8–11; Jordanov 2003 a, 66–67, nr. 23.6–8; Jordanov, Žekova 2007, 110–111, nr. 285, 286; Jordanov 2009, 417, nr. 1172–1174; Jordanov 2011 a, 84, nr. 35–38.
[183] Kostova 2008 a, Table XXIII.

possibly the residence of a *strategos*. It was also far enough from Dristra, and placed right next to a key ford across the Danube. Al-Idrisi, who compiled his geographical work in 1154 mentions a city named Barisklafa near a river and a swamp, at a distance of four days to the east from Daristar (Dristra), through the wilderness. Al-Idrisi's editor, Konrad Miller, has proposed that the itinerary Daristar-Barisklafa-Disina-Akli followed the Danube to the Delta, for he believed Akli to have been Kilia, which however did not exist in the 12th century. Nor does the description of Akli, apparently located in a fertile land, south of the mountains, fits with Kilia in the Danube Delta. Barisklafa and Disina were therefore not along the Danube. From Daristar, the route indicated by al-Idrisi went to the southeast, across the southern part of Dobrudja. *Barisklafa* has been viewed as a misunderstood (or mispronounced) form of *Presthlavitza*. Petre Diaconu has tried to locate it in Pliska,[184] but this is not possible, since Pliska was not in existence in the mid-twelfth century any more, having been destroyed by the Oghuz in 1065. *Barisklafa* could well be Little Preslav, given that because Preslav itself appears as Migali Berisklafa in al-Idrisi's work. There are indeed marshy zones near Preslav, and the river in question may be the Tiča. The location of Barisklafa and Migali Berisklafa on al-Idrisi's map, in the interior and next to a river, matches that identification. However, Barisklafa cannot be the Presthlavitza mentioned on seals of *kommerkiarioi*, because no custom points are known to have existed in the interior. Moreover, this location was too close to Preslav, which already had a *strategos*. Al-Idrisi does not therefore mention Presthlavitza, the residence of *strategoi* and *kommerkiarioi* (present-day Nufăru), for it has nothing to say about the northern part of Dobrudja.[185]

In conclusion, several cities were ruled by *strategoi* in the Dristra/Paradunavon province: Preslav, Pliska, Varna, Isaccea, Presthlavitza (Nufăru), Garvăn, Krivina, and Vetren. It is possible that all major forts and towns had their own *strategoi*.

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[184] Al-Idrisi (ed. Jaubert, 386; ed. Miller, 129); Tomaschek 1886, 301–302, 311; Grămadă 1930, 242; Brătianu 1942, 147–148; Diaconu 1965, 50; Năsturel 1965, 27; Diaconu 1968, 359–361; Diaconu 1976 a, 430–431; Baraschi 1981, 317–318.

[185] The identifications of several names from this al-Idrisi's work with places in northern Dobrudja such as Halmyris or Argamum (Brătescu 1920, 23–31; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 163–166; Cihodaru 1978–1979, 289) are simply wrong. Neither Halmyris (Murighiol) nor Argamum (Jurilovca) were inhabited any more in the 12th century.

3. *The Theme of Sirmium and the New Bulgarian Theme on the Middle Danube*

The Byzantine presence in the Middle Danube region became dangerous for the new Hungarian kingdom seeking expansion to the south, in the direction of the Danube, trade along which had been revived in the early 11th century. During his first reign (1038–1041), Peter Orseolo, king of Hungary, may have offered support to the rebels of the Bulgarian nobleman Peter Delian, who claimed to be the son of the former emperor Gabriel Radomir and of his Hungarian wife, the sister of King Stephen I. The Bulgarian rebellion has started as a protest against the removal of the fiscal and religious privileges established by Basil II in 1018. By 1040, the rebels were already in control of important cities such as Niš and Skopje, and were moving on Thessaloniki. No Byzantine army was able to stop them, but a supposedly heir of the Bulgarian dynasty appeared in the person of Alusian, the son of the last emperor John Vladislav, to challenge Peter Delian. After joining the rebels, Alusian blinded Peter Delian and swiftly made peace with Emperor Michael IV.[186]

Hostilities with Hungary opened in 1059, when Belgrade was briefly taken by Hungarian troops, before Isaac I Comnenos' offensive from Serdica in that same year. The Hungarian attack was justified by the need to punish the Byzantines who had encouraged Pechenegs from the themes of Dristra and Bulgaria to raid southern Hungary.[187] Another Hungarian attack took place in 1071, this time to punish the Pechenegs themselves, who had invaded the region around Sirmium. The Pechenegs were apparently encouraged to do so by the Byzantine commander of Belgrade, *dux Nicota* (Niketas). This duke was most likely the commander of the Sirmium province, and not just the *strategos* of Belgrade.[188] Despite the concentration of Byzantine and Pecheneg forces, Sirmium, Niš and Belgrade were taken by the Hungarians, the latter town after a siege that lasted three months.[189] It is important to note that on both occasions the

[186] Prokić 1906, 49–50; Ferluga 1976, 341, 385; Iljovski 1991, 98–99; Fine 1991, 204; Makk 1999, 36, 47; Curta 2006, 283–284; Madgearu 2008, 66; Révész 2009, 84–88.

[187] Attaliates, ed. Bekker, 66–67 (ed. Pérez Martín, 51–52); Wasilewski 1964, 478–479; Moravcsik 1970, 62–63; Makk 1990, 17; Shepard 1999, 67.

[188] As considered Bănescu 1946, 36–37.

[189] Kinnamos, V. 8 (transl. Brand, 171); SRH, I, 373, 374, 377; Chalandon 1912, 54; Wasilewski 1964, 480–481; Moravcsik 1970, 64–65; Makk 1990, 17–18; Popović 1991, 170, 173; Kühn 1991, 235; Makk 1999, 64, 66; Shepard 1999, 69; Kosztolnyik 2002, 383; Spinei 2006, 187; Stojkovski 2009, 383–387.

Hungarian attacks were in retaliation for Pecheneg raids from the Byzantine Empire.

The victory of the Hungarian king Salomon (1063–1074) was made possible by the difficult situation in the Empire in 1071, the year of the major defeat of the Byzantine army at Mantzikert at the hands of the Seljuk Turks. Following that, in 1072 the rebellion of Paradunavon started, which led to the secession of a large part of the province, and in that same year began another rebellion is mentioned in the theme of Bulgaria. The Bulgarian rebels were led by George Vojtech from Skopje, who bestowed the title of emperor on Constantine Bodin, the son of the prince Mihailo Vojslav of Dioclea (1046–1081). Moreover, George took the name Peter in reference both to the 10th-century Bulgarian emperor Peter and to the rebel Peter Delian. The rebels advanced to Niš and Ochrid, but they were defeated after a few months.[190] It is very likely that the rebels had Hungarian support, much like in 1127 and 1149, when Serbs rebelled against Byzantium at the time of the Byzantine-Hungarian wars.[191]

The theme of Sirmium theme ceased to exist in the aftermath of the Hungarian attack of 1071. Niketas was its last commander. The region to the east and south from Belgrade remained under Byzantine control, but within the theme of Bulgaria. This results from the analysis of the seal of Nikephoros Batatzes, duke of Bulgaria, which was discovered in Moroviskos,[192] a town which had previously been within the theme of Sirmium (see below). It is known that this dignitary was in office after 1075.[193] The message sent to Moroviskos was addressed to a *strategos* under the orders of the duke of Bulgaria.

Peaceful relations between the Byzantine Empire and Hungary were established in 1075 by Michael VII and Géza I (1074–1077), and sealed by means of the latter's marriage with Synadene, the emperor's cousin of the emperor.[194] The empire was looking for allies in the aftermath of the catastrophe at Mantzikert and the numerous mutinies in the Balkans.

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[190] Sacerdoţeanu 1939–1940, 89–91; Ferluga 1976, 81–84; Fine 1991, 213–214; Stephenson 2000, 141–143.

[191] However, Shepard 1999, 70 does not exclude that the possibility of the attack against the theme Sirmium taking place heme happened before the rebellion in the Bulgarian theme.

[192] Maksimović, Popović 1993, 127–128.

[193] Laurent 1969, 144–147; Kühn 1991, 232; Jordanov 2009, 410, nr. 1146; Jordanov 2011 c, 172–174, 182.

[194] Moravcsik 1970, 65–69; Shepard 1999, 72–74; Stephenson 2000, 188–189; Cheynet 2002, 7–10.

Under the circumstances, it was important to turn the northern neighbor into an ally.[195] Géza I's favorable attitude towards Byzantium helped the case. The emperor conceded to Géza the peripheral region of Sirmium, in exchange for security for Belgrade down the stream. The region given to Hungary between Sava and Danube was known as *Sirmia* or *Frankochorion*.[196] Since Roman antiquity, the city of Sirmium (modern Sremska Mitrovica) had been an important economic, military and religious center, revived after 1018. Its abandonment meant a decreasing Byzantine presence in the Middle Danube region, and allowed Hungary to obtain a valuable strategic position, which may be used as a launchpad for any future wars with Byzantium.

Božidar Ferjančić and Ferenc Makk believed that the Byzantines recovered Sirmium in 1075. Their main argument was the 1980 discovery in Mačvanska Mitrovica of a seal of Alexios I Comnenos, who was then *megas domestikos* (commander of the western army). The seal could therefore be dated between the late 1078 and April 1081.[197] But the general situation in the Empire at that time was so difficult that it is hard to imagine the recovery of a remote town such as Sirmium was a real concern for the imperial administration. A different explanation was later offered for the presence of Alexios' seal in Mačvanska Mitrovica: the message had been sent to the Byzantine bishop who continued to reside in Sirmium, and more exactly in Mačvanska Mitrovica, on the southern bank of the Sava, after the Hungarian conquest of 1071.[198] However, it has not yet been noted that this seal is one of many attached to messages the *megas domestikos* Alexios sent out in 1080 during his war against the Normans led by Robert Guiscard. Such messages called for the assistance of the commanders residing in Preslav, Beroe, Tărnovo, Zlati Voivoda and Melnitsa.[199] Does that then mean that Alexios was calling for help from a commander in Sirmium? Since there is no other proof that Sirmium was in Byzantine hands after 1071, the message may have been sent to the Hungarian king Ladislas I (1077–1095).

F. Makk has also maintained that the region around Belgrade was occupied again by the Hungarians in 1091, during Ladislas I's campaign into Croatia. Makk believed this region to have been the *Messia* mentioned in

195 Cheynet 2002, 7.
196 Stephenson 2000, 141, 191–193; Cheynet 2002, 11.
197 Ferjančić 1982, 47–52; Makk 1989, 125; Makk 1990, 18; Maksimović, Popović 1990, 216.
198 Stephenson 2000, 191.
199 Frankopan 2011, 99–106.

Ladislas I's title as rendered by a charter of 1091, but *Messia* was in fact Bosnia, a land which was indeed conquered by Ladislas I in the course of his war against Croatia. This was in fact the interpretation favored by the Hungarian historian György Györffy, to whom Makk also referred, even though he tried to identify Messia with the formerly Roman province of Moesia Prima, an identification for which there is however no evidence.[200] There is in fact no proof that any specific knowledge of the location of the formerly Roman province had survived until the 9th–13th centuries. For instance, both in Bishop Pilgrim of Passau's forgeries of 971–991 and in the chronicle of Simon of Keza, the name Moesia is applied to Moravia.[201]

Everything, therefore, point to the conclusion that Sirmium remained in Hungarian hands after 1071, while Belgrade was under Byzantine rule. When the crusaders showed up in 1096, they are said to have entered the Byzantine territory in Belgrade. In fact, according to Albrecht of Aachen, there was a military commander of the theme of Bulgaria residing in that city: *duce, Nichita nomine, principe Bulgarorum et praeside civitatis Belegravae*. The same man appears in the chronicle of William of Tyre, as *Bulgarorum dux*.[202] He was a namesake of the 1071 commander of the theme of Sirmium in 1071 and of the *protoproedros* Niketas Karykes or Karikes, who was a duke of the theme of Bulgaria. Following Robert Guilland, some have mistaken Niketas Karykes for Leo Nikerites, the last known commander of Paradunavon,[203] even after the correct reading of their respective seals was published by Günter Prinzing.[204] Only Ivan Jordanov expressed doubts about the identification of duke Niketas mentioned in the western sources with Niketas Karykes, on the grounds that the title of *princeps* could not have been the equivalent of *protoproedros* and that the Niketas of the western chroniclers is not named Karykes as well.[205] Such arguments are not sufficient, however, for rejecting the possibility of duke Niketas being Niketas Karykes. The latter is known to have been the commander of the Bulgarian theme and of the city of Belgrade at the same time, which suggests a change of organization taking place at that time, no doubt in order to improve the defense. During the last

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200 Makk 1994 a, 65–67; Makk 1999, 79–84.

201 Eggers 1995, 390–391.

202 Albertus Aquensis, I, 7–9, 13 (ed. Edgington, 12/15, 16/17, 18/19, 28/29); William of Tyre, I, 18, 19 (ed. Babcock, Krey, I, 98, 100); Runciman 1949, 211–213; Popović 1991, 170.

203 Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 185.

204 Bănescu 1946, 149; Kühn 1991, 231; Prinzing 1995, 220–224.

205 For the seals see Jordanov 2003 a, 50–51, nr. 19.2; Jordanov 2006, 191–192, nr. 288; Jordanov 2009, 410, nr. 1145; Jordanov 2010, 184–185; Jordanov 2011 c, 170–172, 183.

decades of the 11th century, a duke of Skopje (Skopion) is mentioned, first in 1078 (Alexander Kabasilas) and then around 1100 (John Comnenos).[206] This suggest that the large theme of Bulgaria was divided into two smaller provinces, one under a duke residing in Skopje, the other, which was still called Bulgaria, under a duke residing in Belgrade. A similar action had taken place in 1059, when the duchy of Serdica was detached from Bulgaria. The northern part of the theme of Bulgaria was more exposed to Hungarian attacks, and it may be on that basis that Pecheneg groups were moved to Belgrade and its hinterland in the late 11th century. The Pechenegs were in military service under the command of the duke and they had small boats (*naviculas*) to monitor traffic on the Sava and the Danube river, as indeed they did with the crusaders of 1096.[207]

At some point before 1114, Alexios I Comnenos brought another change to the administrative organization in the region, as he moved the headquarters of the Bulgarian theme from Belgrade to Niš (Nisos, the ancient Naissos). That the province extended at that time as far north as Braničevo and Belgrade is mentioned by Anna Comnena.[208] The retreat inside of the province, into the mountain region may reflect the same strategic concept which had been applied to the eastern parts of the Balkans, when the emperor moved the defense line on the Stara Planina range of mountains. A duke of Niš under Emperor Alexios I, named Nikephoros Dekanos, is attested by three seals.[209] Tadeusz Wasilewski believed that the duchy of Niš came into being after 1071, but at that time, as well as in 1096, the residence of the commander of the theme of Bulgaria was in Belgrade, not in Niš. It is in the former, not in the latter, that duke Niketas is said to have taken refuge when the crusaders of Peter the Hermit crossed the river. At that moment, Niš belonged to the southern Bulgarian theme, for the crusaders led by Walter the Penniless are said to have were encountered there another *dux et princeps Bulgarorum*.[210] This strongly suggests that the transfer of the theme's headquarters from Belgrade to Niš took place sometime after 1096. The subsequent history of the duchy of Niš remains unclear until two other dukes are mentioned, one in 1147

[206] Bănescu 1946, 149; Kühn 1991, 231–233; Nesbitt, Oikonomides 1991, 98, nr. 30.
[207] Albertus Aquensis, I, 8 (ed. Edgington, 18/19); Marjanović-Vujović 1974, 183–188.
[208] Anna Comnena, XIV, 8.1 (transl. Sewter, 462); Wasilewski 1964, 481; Stephenson 2000, 152; Jordanov 2010, 177.
[209] Jordanov 2003 a, 131–132, nr. 55.1; Jordanov 2006, 125–136, nr. 163–164; Jordanov 2009, 461–462, nr. 1367–1367 A; Jordanov 2010, 179–180.
[210] Albertus Aquensis, I, 6 (ed. Edgington, 10/11).

(Michael Branas)[211] and the other in 1153 (the future emperor Andronikos Comnenos).[212] Both commanders appear in the sources at the time of the military confrontation with Hungary. However, because it is certain that Braničevo was under Byzantine administration in 1127,[213] it may have belonged to the duchy of Niš.

Before the headquarters of the Bulgarian theme were established in Belgrade, that city had its own *strategos*, who is mentioned in 1026, in the account of the pilgrimage of St. Simon of Trier returning from the Monastery Saint Catherine in Sinai. When he got to Belgrade, he was prevented by the *princeps civitatis* to enter Hungary (*pervenientes itaque usque ad civitatem Bellegradam, quae est in confinio Bulgariorum atque Ungariorum, a civitatis infelicissimo principe prohibitus est nobiscum transire*).[214] The *princeps* was most likely the *strategos* of the city. Another *strategos* resided in Braničevo, a town which emerged in the 9th century on the site of the ancient city of Viminacium, at the confluence between the Mlava and the Danube. Braničevo grew quickly in the 11th century, and became the main center of the defensive system in the region.[215] Several seals suggest the existence of a *strategos* residing in Moroviskos (Moravon), a fortified settlement at the mouth of Morava (today Dubravica), which was occupied continuously between the 10th and the 12th century.[216] The forts of Moroviskos and Braničevo were meant to defend the Morava valley, the axis of the main road to Thessaloniki and Constantinople. Finally, the existence of a *strategos* in Niš is proved by the seal of the *protospatharios* Nikephoros Lalakon, which is dated after the mid-11th century.[217]

In comparison with the katepanate of Paradunavon, the region to the west from Vidin appears as less important for the Byzantine strategy, at least until Hungary began to expand in Belgrade-Braničevo area. This area will become a sensitive issue in the 12th century and later, when the place of the Byzantine Empire in confrontations with Hungary will be taken by the Vlach-Bulgarian Empire.

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[211] Kinnamos, II. 13 (transl. Brand, 60); Bănescu 1946, 160; Stephenson 2000, 259; Jordanov 2010, 186.

[212] Niketas Choniates, *Manuel Comnenos*, 3 (ed. Dieten, 101; transl. Magoulias, 58); Bănescu 1946, 43, 161; Urbansky 1968, 80–81; Stephenson 2000, 233–234.

[213] See chapter III, footnote 218.

[214] Eberwinus, 210; Wasilewski 1964, 478; Bálint 1991, 104; Stephenson 2000, 124 (who supposed that he was a "local magnate" who ruled the city); Holmes 2005, 425. For the date, see Klein 2005, 187.

[215] Popović, Ivanišević 1988, 125–179; Maksimović, Popović 1990, 222; Milošević 1991, 187–195.

[216] Maksimović, Popović 1993, 127–129.

[217] Nesbitt, Oikonomides 1991, 100 (nr. 32.2); Stephenson 2000, 124; Jordanov 2010, 178.

CHAPTER THREE

THE EVOLUTION AND FUNCTION OF THE DANUBE FRONTIER OF BYZANTIUM (1000–1204)

1. *The Fortifications*

After the war of 968–971, the strategic target of Emperor John Tzimiskes' military policies on the Danube was to prevent any future attacks of the Rus' by means of both diplomacy and fortifications. The first diplomatic action in that direction was the alliance with the Pechenegs, right after Svyatoslav's capitulation,[1] even though relations with the Pechenegs would develop in a way different from that that John Tzimiskes had envisaged. Those nomadic warriors would in fact turn into the next threat to the security of the frontier. For the moment, however, and for the next fifty years or so, the Pechenegs in the area north of the Black Sea and in Moldavia acted as shield against the Rus'.

On the other hand, the building activity along the Danube consisted of the restoration of several old Roman forts and the erection of new ones at strategic points. The forts along the Danube were initially only for garrisons of soldiers, but they gradually grew into larger settlements, inhabited by civilians, as well as the military. Houses began to be built next to the ramparts, as in Garvăn and Nufăru.[2] When possible, the Byzantine builders reused the remains of the old Roman structures, especially the ramparts. The new walls were made of ashlar with a core of stones mixed with mortar. Their thickness varies between 2.5 and 3.5 meters. Tenth- to eleventh-century forts are smaller in area than the Roman forts they commonly overlap, which speaks volumes about the smaller number of soldiers in their garrisons.

Silver coins (*miliaresia* worth 1/12 of a gold coin) struck for John Tzimiskes and found in (6 specimens), Păcuiul lui Soare (2 specimens), Dervent (one specimen), Oltina (3 specimens), Constanţa (2 specimens), Vetren (one specimen), and Valul lui Traian (one specimen) betray the

[1] Shepard 1985, 253 remarked that "the Byzantines intended to seal the Danube frontier by means of a considerable military force" against future Rus' attacks.

[2] Barnea 1971, 354 (Garvăn); Baraschi, Moghior 1983, 137 (Nufăru).

presence of the military (even though Valul lui Traian is a non-fortified settlement), as such coins were distributed as salary for the soldiers.[3] There are many more such coins in forts than in cities in the interior, most likely because they were used to pay the army during or shortly after the campaign of 971.[4] A lead sheet was found in Silistra, which was used for the production of silver coins, no doubt indicating the presence in Dristra of the mobile mint accompanying the army.[5] The cluster of coin finds in the hinterland of Dristra mirrors the military operations discussed in the first chapter of this book. As a matter of fact, the presence of the Byzantine coins in the aftermath of the Byzantine conquest of the northern and northeastern Balkans is an indication of the presence of the military, not of active trade relations.[6]

Archaeology is now in a position to provide sufficient data for establishing a rough chronology of the defense system on the Danube frontier. Soon after the conquest the reconstruction of the Roman forts and the building of new ones began. The first Roman fortress to be reoccupied after 971 was that **Mahmudia** (known as Salsovia in the Roman period). Coins and other artifacts recovered from field surveys or known as stray finds point to the reuse of the formerly Roman fort (area: 150 × 120 m) since at least the reign of Basil II. A *miliaresion* struck for that emperor may indicate the existence of a garrison, but it is not certain that the coin was actually found in Mahmudia. Other bronze coins are dated up to the reign of Romanos IV (1067–1071). Nothing is known about a possible restoration of the old precinct (the results of the excavations from 2004 are limited to Late Roman finds).[7]

The fortress of **Nufăru** (fig. 5) was built immediately after 971, as indicated by the analysis of coin finds,[8] on the site of the Late Roman fort that operated there until the early 7th century. The Byzantine rampart

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[3] Damian 1995, 218; Custurea 2000, 136, 137, 148, 152, 157; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 35; Custurea, Matei 2002–2003, 433–438; Poenaru-Bordea, Ocheşeanu, Popeea 2004, 133, 134; Custurea, Talmaţchi 2011, 292.

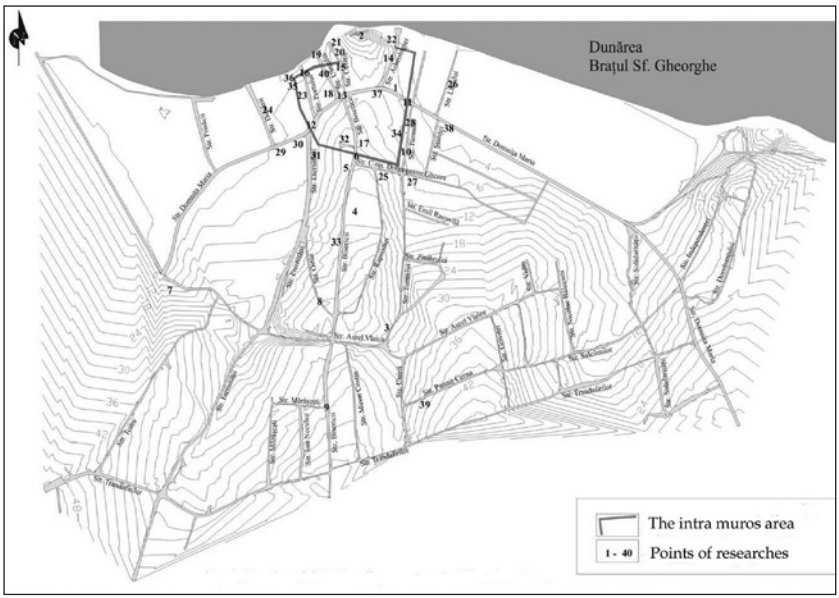
[4] Metcalf 1976, 96.

[5] Damian 1995, 219.

[6] Metcalf 1976, 89–97.

[7] Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1980 b, 66–70; Vasiliu, Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1984, 150 şi nota 56; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1992, 399–400; Damian 1995, 220; Custurea 2000, 143; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 65–66, 414 (tabel 16); Oberländer-Târnoveanu 2003, 386; Topoleanu et alii 2005, 215–216; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2010 a, 419–449; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2010 e, 225–226.

[8] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1998, 80; Custurea 2000, 146–147; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 63–64; Damian, Andonie, Vasile 2003, 239.



5. The fort and settlement of Nufăru (after Damian et alii 2012, 195)

is 2.6–2.7 m thick and encloses an area of about 6 hectares. Five towers have been so far identified on the eastern, northern and western sides. Three of them are separated from the rampart (on the eastern side, at the north-western corner, and on the northern side), while two other towers are embedded into the the rampart (on the western side).[9] The fortress had a harbor from the very beginning. At the site, which to this day is used as anchorage, there was a 14.2 m-long jetty—a wall attached to the rock and made of large stones bonded with mortar. The jetty was 2 m thick and must have been built in the late 10th century, at the same time as the first rampart. The connection with the fortress was made by an entrance through the northern side of the rampart.[10] Assuming that Presthlavitza was at Nufăru, the harbor must have also serves as a customs point with an office for *kommerkiarioi*. The presence of the Varangians is indicated by the wooden buildings and a timber pavement, 5.7 m long and 1.2 m wide,

[9] Damian, Andonie, Damian 1994, 168–170; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 61–62; Damian et alii 2003, 72–75; Damian 2005, 177–180; Damian, Vasile et alii 2010, 31–33.

[10] Damian, Andonie, Vasile 2000, 67; Damian, Andonie, Vasile 2002, 217; Damian et alii 2003, 74; Damian et alii 2007; Damian et alii 2012; Damian, Andonie, Vasile 2003, 213–216; Mănucu-Adameşteanu, Poll 2006, 436; Damian, Vasile et alii 2010, 33; Damian, Mărgineanu-Cârstoiu et alii 2011, 91.

which was uncovered in 2002 and 2003. It remains unclear when the Varangians may have come to Nufăru, either before or after the establishment of the Byzantine fortress.[11] The large number of coin finds[12] and of other artifacts, particularly imports and luxury goods indicate a flourishing life in this fortified settlement during the 11th century, when the occupied area was extended up to 800 m farther on the bank of the Danube. The suburb was however abandoned and turned into a cemetery after the Pecheneg attack of 1122.[13]

At **Tulcea**, the old Roman fort of Aegyssus located on the hill known as "Hora" was reoccupied during the Byzantine period. The Roman polygonal precinct was restored (a segment of the new wall was found in 1993). Houses and huts were discovered inside the fortified area. At first, archaeologists believed that the fort has been established under John Tzimiskes, but the analysis of the coin finds suggests a date after 1000 for the foundation of the fort (anonymous folles of the A1 type, which are dated to the reign of John Tzimiskes, have not been found on the site). The fort remained in use until the reign of Constantine IX (1042–1055). In other words, the Tulcea fort (whatever its Byzantine name) was abandoned after the Pecheneg attack of 1047.[14]

The Roman ramparts in **Isaccea** (ancient Noviodunum) were most certainly restored soon after 971.[15] The seal of a commander named Niketas Hagiozacharites may be dated to this early period, since he is to have been captured by the rebel general Bardas Phokas in March 979.[16] At any rate, the seal shows the presence of the military in Isaccea before 979, which indirectly suggests that the fort may have been restored for the occasion. As mentioned in the first chapter, it is also certain that Isaccea was used by the Byzantine army after 990. The coin finds also point to the occupation beginning during the reign of John Tzimiskes.[17] On the northern side of the fort along the Danube (excavated for 250 m), were six towers

[11] Damian, Andonie, Vasile 2003, 214–215; Damian, Andonie, Vasile 2004, 219; Yotov 2007, 323; Damian, Vasile 2011, 275–290.

[12] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1991 b, 497–554; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 413 (table 15).

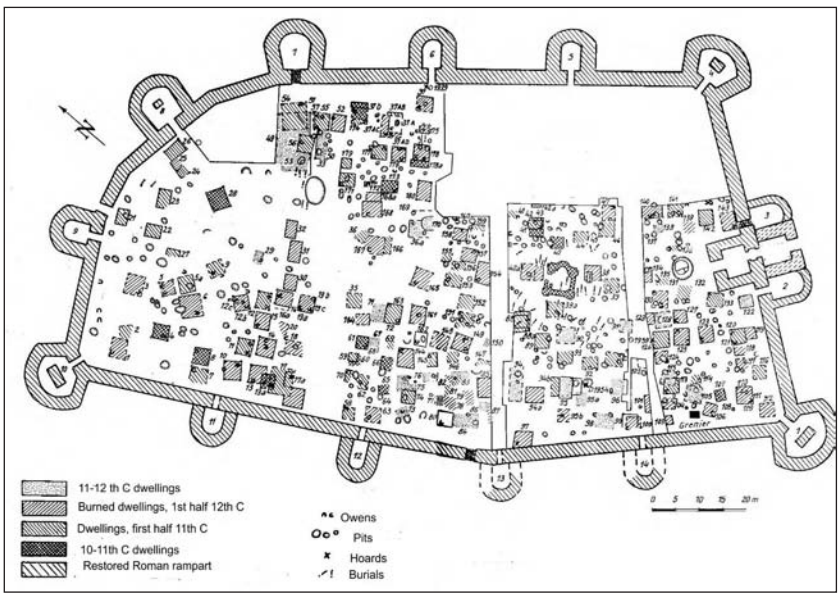
[13] Damian, Andonie, Vasile 2003, 243.

[14] Vasiliu, Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1984, 149; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1995 b, 363; Custurea 2000, 155; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 58–59; Oberländer-Târnoveanu 2003, 389; Damian 2005, 147; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2010 a, 295–418; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2010 c, 223, 228–230.

[15] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 55–59.

[16] Barnea 1987 b, 81.

[17] Custurea 2000, 141–142.



6. The fort of Dinogetia (after Barnea 1980, Plate XV)

of rectangular plan (each was 9.5 × 10 m). On the eastern side of the late Roman rampart a new 3 m thick curtain was built in the Byzantine period, at a distance of 12 m from the 6th century wall (which was 285 m long), in the interior. The so-called Large Tower (9 × 25 m) was in fact built in the early 4th century on the southern side of the fort, and then restored in the 11th century, before being abandoned in that same century. The occupied area extended outside the ramparts during that century, but that part of the settlement was abandoned after the Cuman attack of 1095, or after that of 1122, and was turned into a cemetery during the 12th century.[18]

The 4th- to 6th-century fort located on an island at **Garvăn** (ancient Dinogetia) was restored and a garrison of *stratiotai* was established inside it, their houses being dug into the leveled debris from the Late Roman period (fig. 6). The polygonal fort has an area of 1.2 hectares with a 2.8–3 m thick rampart and 14 towers (11 along the walls and 3 in the corners). The main gate on the southern side is 2.5 m large. Two other entrances exist

[18] Baumann, Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001, 219; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 57; Baumann et alii 2002, 158; Baumann et alii 2004, 147; Damian 2005, 173–174; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2009, 625, 628–629.

on the western and northern sides, respectively.[19] The first occupation phase of the Byzantine site is coin-dated to the reign of Emperor John Tzimiskes.[20] Moreover, ten gold coins (tetartera) struck for Basil II and found on the site have led some scholars to the conclusion that a provincial mint for the army may have operated in Garvăn.[21] As in Nufăru and Isaccea, the occupied area extended beyond the walls, but was abruptly interrupted by the Pecheneg invasions ofthe 1080s. During the 12th century, the area outside the rampart became a cemetery.[22]

At **Măcin** (ancient Arrubium), the Byzantine occupation is documented primarily by pottery finds typical for the 10th and 11th centuries, as well as by 25 *folles* dated without interruption between 976 and 1081. A silver coin (*stamenon*) struck for Emperor Alexios I Comnenos in 1092–1118 is also known from this site. The scarce archaeological evidence available so far is not sufficient for deciding whether the walls of the early Roman camp (220 × 170 m) or those of the late Roman fort (45 × 75 m) were restored after 971.[23]

At **Turcoaia** (ancient Troesmis), only the western fort was occupied in the early 11th century. The eastern fort was not restored, but the area between the two forts was apparently occupied. That area shrank after the Pecheneg invasion of 1036 which has been also blamed for a layer of destruction by fire inside the western fort. That fort seems to have been abandoned during the secession of 1072–1091, and then reoccupied after a while until the Pecheneg and Cuman invasion of 1122. The series of coin finds covers with some interruptions the whole period between Basil II and Manuel I Comnenos.[24]

At **Piatra Frecăţei** (Ostrov commune, Tulcea county), archaeologists have established that Beroe, the old Roman fort, and its suburb area

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[19] Diaconu 1969 a, 44–49; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 77; Barnea 1971, 353–354; Barnea 1980, 243–244; Damian 2005, 165–167.

[20] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 52–53; Custurea 2000, 137.

[21] Metcalf 1979, 53–54; Mănucu-Adameşteanu, Poll 1999, 345; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 d, 50.

[22] Barnea 1973, 292–293, 298–301; Barnea 1980, 259; Barnea et alii 2004, 126–127.

[23] Condurachi, Barnea, Diaconu 1967, 184; I. Barnea, P. Diaconu, *Arrubium*, EAIVR, I, 1994, 120–121; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1992, 400; Custurea 2000, 144–145; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 51; Oberländer-Târnoveanu 2003, 386–387, 394; Damian 2005, 148–149; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2010 a, 267–294; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2010 f, 237–242.

[24] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1980, 230–234; Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1980 a, 267–269, 274–278; Custurea 2000, 141; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 49–50; Oberländer-Târnoveanu 2003, 389, 395; Damian 2005, 163–165; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2010 a, 181–265; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2010 d, 439–469.

were again occupied after 971. In a sunken-floored building dug into the ruins of the former rampart a coin was found, which had been struck for Emperor Michael IV. This has been interpreted to mean that a part of the old ramparts, which had not been repaired after 971, was still used for the protection of the inhabitants, but only until the destruction caused by the Pecheneg invasions of 1032–1036. The occupation continued after that without a repaired precinct, perhaps until the Cuman attack of 1122.[25]

At **Hârşova** (ancient Carsium), the 1.5 hectare promontory is surrounded by three concentrical precincts, which were used not only by the Byzantines, but also by the Ottomans until their final dismantlement in 1829. The southern side of the fort was protected by a natural cliff. According to the results of the latest excavations on the western side, the outside rampart (I), which 1.5 m thick and measures 80 m to the north, 76 m to the east, and 86 m to the west, is the most recent, and may be dated to the Byzantine period (and not to Roman period, as scholars previously believed). Its foundation trench cuts through a layer with 9th–10th-century pottery. The actual Roman precinct is the innermost (III), but it too was used in the 10th–12th centuries. Outside the walls, a civilian settlement existed in the 11th century. Coin finds from Hârşova are dated between the reigns of John Tzimiskes and Alexios I Comnenos, the latest being a *stamenon* from the first series dated after 1092. It is important to note that silver coins struck for all Comnenian emperors in the 12th century have been found on the site, a very unusual situation for Dobrudja, which may point to the special significance of this fort.[26] The Romanian name appears to be related to the ancient name Carsium through a Slavic intermediary form, which must have been in use during the Byzantine period. The absence of any coins struck for John II Comnenos may indicate that the fort was destroyed in 1122.

Capidava was also on a promontory, which is now to the south from the village of Topalu. The medieval fort occupied the same site as the Roman camp. Radu Florescu believed the first occupation phase to be dated to the 9th century by means of pottery remains. The earliest fort was defended by a rampart made of remains of Roman buildings, and by

[25] Custurea 2000, 147–148; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 47–48; Barnea et alii 2002, 255; Stănică 2004, 357, 365; Damian 2005, 149; Barnea et alii 2009, 161; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2010 a, 267–294; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2010 b, 94–95, 103–104.

[26] Condurachi, Barnea, Diaconu 1967, 184–185; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 80; Panait et alii 1995–1996, 122–127; Custurea 2000, 140; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 45–47, 403 (table 5); Oberländer-Târnoveanu 2003, 386, 394; Damian 2005, 160–163; Covacef, Nicolae 2005, 169–171; Covacef, Nicolae 2007, 178–181; Nicolae et alii 2008, 319–323.

a ditch.[27] Petre Diaconu rejected that interpretation, and argued that the first occupation phase cannot be dated before 971.[28] To be sure, despite intensive archaeological research on the site, so far only two coins dated before 971 are known.[29] Radu Florescu's chronology is not supported by any shred of evidence. The Byzantine fort used a part of the Late Roman precinct, which is 2.75 m thick, surmounted by a new, 2 m-thick wall on the northern, eastern and southern sides, made of *spolia* from the Roman ruins. The series of coin finds has a gap between 986 and 1000. The most recent excavations show the existence of another precinct on the eastern side. Capidava was abandoned after a Pecheneg invasion in 1047. It is not clear if the Roman harbor was also used during the Byzantine period.[30]

Given its incorporation into the precinct of a military facility, no systematic excavations have ever been carried out in **Hinog (ancient Axiopolis)** after those of Grigore Tocilescu (1895–1896) and Carl Schuhhardt (1916–1917). Three consecutive fortifications were built on raised ground in front of the Hinog island, about 3 km south of Cernavoda, in front of the Hinog Island. The southern fortress was used in the Roman and Byzantine periods. According to the available data, it is a quadrangular fortification with sides measuring 161 m (to the north), 210 m (to the east), 200 m (to the south), and 250 m (to the west), respectively. Taking into account that it is strategically located next to one of the most important fords across the Danube, Axiopolis may have already been occupied in 971. An anonymous *follis* of type A1 found on the site may support that supposition. All other coins are from the subsequent reigns between Basil II and Romanos IV, but there is also one struck for Emperor Alexios I after 1092.[31] Since Axiopolis was the see of a bishop in the 11th century,[32] this may have been quite an important site.

At **Oltina**, the systematic excavations carried on the site at "Capul Dealului" since 2001 have established that the fortress was used during the 11th

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[27] Florescu 1967, 259–268; Florescu 1986, 175–176; Opriş 2004, 69. Accepted by Fiedler 2008, 199.

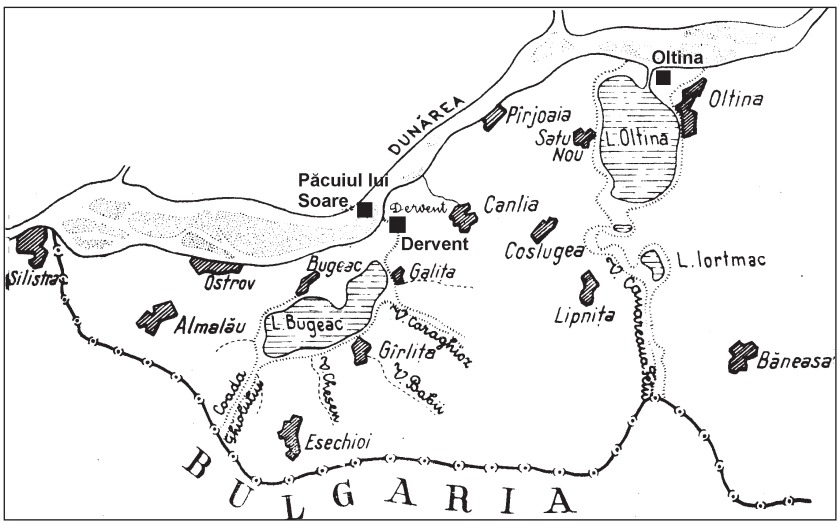
[28] Diaconu 1969 a, 46–48.

[29] Gândilă 2007, 608, 615–616 (one *follis* from Leo VI, 886–912 and another one from Romanos I, 931–934).

[30] Florescu, Covacef 1988–1989, 204–244; A. Barnea, I. Barnea, *Capidava*, EAIVR, I, 1994, 249; Custurea 1995–1996, 301–307; Custurea 2000, 134; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 43–44, 402 (table 4); Damian 2005, 158–159; Pinter, Ţiplic, Urduzia, 2008, 85–86; Pinter, Urduzia, 2009, 89–90.

[31] Barnea 1960, 69–78; I. Barnea, *Axiopolis*, EAIVR, I, 1994, 146; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 40–42, 160; Damian 2005, 148.

[32] Popescu 1994, 421–438.



7. The group of fortifications Păcuiul lui Soare-Dervent-Oltina (after Diaconu, Vâlceanu 1972, 10, fig. 1)

century, but the earthen rampart on the western side was not replaced with a stone wall after 971. The rampart was uncovered along a span of 410 m. The gate was on the south-western side. The coins discovered during the excavations indicate its occupation between the reigns of John Tzimiskes and Nikephoros III Botaneiates (1078–1081). The number of coins visibly decreased after Constantine X. The seal of Gregory Mavrokatakalon is a valuable proof that the fort remained in existence until the last two decades of the 11th century.[33]

In Dobrudja, another important ford across the Danube is in **Dervent** (the Turkish name actually means "ford, passage") (see Fig. 7). On a 40m-high promontory, a new fort was built next to the ruins of the old Roman one. The Byzantine fort has a 1.85 m-thick rampart, but its size remains unknown, for only the eastern side has been uncovered, and it is 120 m long. That the fort was built during the reign of John Tzimiskes is indicated by the silver coin already mentioned. The other coins found on the site are dated between the reign of Tzimiskes and that of Michael IV, which means that the final destruction may be attributed to the Pecheneg

[33] Custurea 2000, 151; Custurea 2000–2001, 583–594; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 39–40; Chiriac et alii 2003, 220; Chiriac et alii 2004, 222–224; Custurea 2006, 415–421; Custurea 2009, 612–621.

invasions of 1035–1036. The coins struck for Constantine IX, Constantine X, and Alexios I recorded for this site in older studies are in fact from Păcuiul lui Soare. The exact date of the other destruction by fire, which has been observed in the site's stratigraphy remains unknown, and it may be the result either of some catastrophic event during peacetime, or of Samuel's campaign of 986. Outside the fortress, the place was transformed into a cemetery for the population from the neighbor settlement Păcuiul lui Soare.[34]

The island **Păcuiul lui Soare** near Dervent has the most spectacular Byzantine fortress so far known in Dobrudja. It most certainly operated as a naval base between 971 and at least 986. At the time of its building, the fort was in fact on the left bank of the river, i.e., a bridgehead. The largest part of the precinct (which was probably trapezoidal) is now sunken, but the total area could be estimated at around 4 or 5 hectares. The 6 m-thick walls were built on oak beams in order to cope with the instability of the soil. They were made of large ashlars bonded with water-resistant mortar. The north-eastern wall is still standing on a 42 m-long segment, while the south-eastern one runs for 240 m. The main gate was on the north-eastern side—a rectangular tower (10.5 × 14.7 m), reaching 8.5 m to the outside. Another gate may have existed on the southern side. The military harbor was on the south-eastern side and consisted of a 24 m-long platform, with a 4 m-large entry and two large, rectangular towers. The southern tower is 9.3 m long and 5.6 m wide. The initial goal of this naval base was to prevent any Rus' attacks directed at Dristra, which is 18 km up the river. The naval base at Păcuiul lui Soare was integrated into the same system of fortifications as the forts in **Oltina** and **Dervent** (perhaps also as those from **Rasova** and **Cochirleni**, which are likely to have survived after 971). The fortress was abandoned in 986. After 1000, it became a fortified settlement without any military function.[35]

As for Nufăru, Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu denied that the fortress in Păcuiul lui Soare was built during the reign of John Tzimiskes, since

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[34] Diaconu, Anghelescu 1968, 348–349; Diaconu 1970, 44; Diaconu 1977 b, 62; P. Diaconu, *Dervent*, EAIVR, II, 1996, 50; Custurea 2000, 137; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 37–39, 111, 400 (table 2); Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 b, 93, 400 (table 2); Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2003, 303, 306; Damian 2005, 146–147; Damian, Vasile 2010, 338–339.

[35] Diaconu 1966, 367–370; Condurachi, Barnea, Diaconu 1967, 190; Diaconu 1969 b; Diaconu 1976 a, 409–447; Diaconu, Vâlceanu 1972, 23–25, 52–54; Diaconu, Damian, Vasile 2001, 170–172; Diaconu, Damian, Mărgineanu-Cârstoiu 2004, 226–227; Diaconu, Damian, Mărgineanu-Cârstoiu 2005, 252; Damian 2005, 150–153; Damian, Bănăseanu 2006, 249; Damian, Ene 2011, 95; Damian, Olteanu 2012, 94.

only a few folles of type A2 (dated 976–1020) are known from the site.[36] However, the stratigraphical evidence from the site is indisputable. Morevoer, it has been recently demonstrated that about a quarter of the folles of type A2 are earlier variants, which may be dated before 1000, in which case they actually support the idea of the naval base being in existence between 971 and 986. The site has actually produced five coins struck for Emperor John Tzimiskes.[37] Another group of scholars believe that the fortress was in existence already before 971. According to such opinions, Păcuiul lui Soare was Mundraga, to which Emperor Symeon fled when attacked by the Magyars in 895.[38] However, it is more likely that Mundraga was present-day Tutrakan.[39] According to a third theory, Păcuiul lui Soare was the so-called "Omurtag's palace from the Danube" mentioned in a ninth-century, Bulgar inscription from Tărnovo,[40] but it is now clear that that palace was in fact in Dorostolon/Silistra.[41] The ramparts made of large ashlars without a filling, but set on timber beams reminds one of the walls from Pliska and Preslav, and are substantially different from those of the Byzantine forts located north of Axiopolis and built after 971. Radu Florescu saw that difference as a key argument in favor of the idea that Păcuiul lui Soare was in fact a Bulgarian fort erected during the reign of Symeon.[42] But the building technique in question is not Bulgarian, and even in Pliska and Preslav its application must be attributed to Byzantine masons or to Bulgarian masons working after Byzantine models. On the other hand, there are practical reasons for its application in Păcuiul lui Soare, particularly because of the instability of the soil.[43] Only artifacts securely dated to the 9th century—either coins, or pottery—such as

[36] Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1998, 76.

[37] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 33–36, 399 (table 1); Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1998–2003, nr. 146–151, 164–165.

[38] Kuzev 1972, 418.

[39] Tsankova-Petkova 1975, 35–40. Another opinion: Beševliev 1985, 17–21 (one of the *akropoleis* of Dristra).

[40] Mutafčiev 1932, 192; Kuzev 1969, 138; Kuzev, Gjuzelev 1981, 196–200; Ovčarov 1987, 57–68; Gjuzelev 1991, 86. For the inscription see Beševliev 1963, 247–260; Petkov 2008, 11. The Bulgarian origin of this fortress was also admitted by Beševliev 1981, 469; Soustal 1997, 119; Curta 2006, 241.

[41] Beševliev 1962, 71 and Petkov 2008, 11 observed that the distance between Pliska and that palace recorded in the inscription is the same as that between Pliska and Dristra. See also Fiedler 2008, 193. The recent study of Atanasov 2012 brought final archaeological evidence in this respect.

[42] Florescu, Ciobanu 1972, 390, 394–395; Florescu 1986, 175. A similar opinion in Comşa 1983, 102.

[43] See the remarks of Diaconu 1988 a, 181–183 about Ovčarov 1987.

found in Oltina, Rasova and Cochirleni-Cetatea Pătulului, may solve this problem. So far, however, no such evidence has emerged.

Dristra, the headquarters of the province, was incorporated into the Bulgar state at an early date, but it is possible that it was recovered for short periods by the Byzantines during the campaigns of Constantine V, when the Byzantine navy moved on the Danube. The development of the city as a Bulgar center began in the early 9th century under Krum, as indicated by an intensive building activity. At that time, a new wall was built, which enclosed an area of 0.45 ha on the bank of the Danube. This was also the wall in use during the Byzantine period, along with the old Roman precinct. Recent archaeological excavations have identified the pier. Its timber beams have been radiocarbon-dated to 780± 200, a date the margin of error of which is far too large for deciding whether the pier is a Byzantine or a Bulgarian construction. At any rate, Dristra was the see of a Bulgarian bishop.[44] During the 11th century, a new fort was built in the southern part of the city. After 1088, the area within the walls shrank, with previously occupied sectors turning into burial grounds.[45]

To the west from Dristra, the archaeological evidence of Byzantine forts is rather meager. The fort in **Vetren** (20 km west of Silistra) was erected on the site of the Roman camp of Tegulicium, which had meanwhile been occupied by a ninth-century rural settlement. Several seals are known from Vetren, among which the most important is that of Tyrach (*protospatharios* and *eparchos*) and that of *katepano* Romanos Diogenes. The coins finds cover the entire period between John Tzimiskes to Alexios I, with the latest coins being three *tetartera* struck after 1092. A special find is a hoard of 12 *nomisma histamenon*.[46] The imperial tent of Alexios I, which was used during the siege of Dristra in 1087 (see chapter III. 2), is known to have been sent to Vetren (*Vetrinon*).[47] A (yet unpublished) seal of Alexios I is known from Spanţov, on the opposite (northern) bank of the Danube.[48] However, according to the information in the archive of the Institute of Archaeology in Bucharest, where the seal is now preserved, the actual find spot is in the village of Stancea, which is very close to the fortress of

[44] Soustal 1997, 119–123; Angelova, Koleva 2004, 21–28.

[45] The information about two fortresses called with the unfit word *akropoleis* was transmitted by Anna Comnena, VII, 3.3 (transl. Sewter, 193). For the fortifications in the 11th–12th centuries, see Kuzev 1969, 138–139; Angelova 1993, 52–57.

[46] Atanasov, Jordanov 1994, 42–45; Oberländer-Târnoveanu 2003, 390, 395; Custurea, Talmaţchi 2011, 378.

[47] Anna Comnena, VII, 3.6 (transl. Sewter, 194); Stanev 2012, 21–25.

[48] Condurachi, Barnea, Diaconu 1967, 193; Diaconu 1978, 55.

Vetrinon. It is possible that the seal has been attached to a message sent to a military unit which had crossed the Danube against the Pechenegs. At a distance of only 5 km to the west, on the southern bank, at **Popina**, there was another fort with a stone rampart enclosing an area of 140 × 150 m. The fort may have been built in the 9th century, but coin finds clearly indicate its use during the Byzantine period until the 1080ss. Not far from it, at **Gradiščeto**, there was another fort with an earthen rampart, which is also dated to the 11th century. A seal of Basil Apokapes is known from Popina.[49] The re-occupation of the 9th- to 10th-century stronghold in **Krivina** (on the site of the Roman fort Iatrus) may be coin-dated to the 1030s, that is to the reign of Michael IV (1034–1041). There are so far no anonymous folles of type A2, which are known to have been struck under Basil II and Constantine VIII. The fort in Krivina appears to have remained in use until the Pecheneg invasion of 1047.[50] Scarce information is available for the forts in **Tutrakan**, **Ruse**, **Svištov**, **Gigen**, **Nikopol,** and **Vidin**. Vidin and Svištov are actually mentioned by al-Idrisi in 1154 as *Bidenu* and *Bestcastro* (*Suvestcastro*), respectively.[51]

The segment of the Danube between Braničevo and Sirmium was the most exposed to the Hungarian attacks, which started in 1059 and were directed at the valley of the Morava. The restoration of the defense system in this region was therefore the result of the measures taken by Isaac I Comnenos. The Iron Gates area was part of the theme of Sirmium established in 1018, but was threatened by attacks from Hungary, as long as the Hungarians did not yet control the valley of the Cerna river vis-à-vis the mouth of the Timok river. Hungarians came to control the valley of the Cerna only after 1127. Nonetheless, the Roman watch-tower in Veliki Gradac (ancient Taliata) was restored from ground up in the 11th century,[52] But no other formerly Roman forts in the Iron Gates area are known to have been integrated into the defense system, even if some of them appear to have occupied in the 11th century as well.

In conclusion, it appears that the main reason for restoring the defense system on the Danube frontier was the protection of Dristra and of the main fords at Nufăru, Isaccea, Garvăn, and Dervent. Troops garrisoned in

[49] Mănucu-Adameşteanu, Jordanov 2002, 125–126; Oberländer-Târnoveanu 2003, 388.
[50] Diaconu 1988 b, 202–203; Schönert-Geiss 1991, 239; Diaconu 1992 a, 180.
[51] Al-Idrisi (ed. Jaubert, 386; ed. Miller, 129); Tomaschek 1886, 299, 300; Kuzev 1966, 23–50; Kuzev 1967, 41–70; Kuzev 1968, 37–49; Cihodaru 1968, 224; Kuzev, Gjuzelev 1981, 98–115, 149–156.
[52] Popović 1991, 175.

the theme of Dristra, later Paradunavon, were expected to prevent and repel attacks from the lands north of the Danube. In most cases, the Byzantines simply rebuild—sometimes on a smaller scale—the old Roman forts. The restoration skipped a number of old Roman forts along the Danube, no doubt because of lack of sufficient soldiers for the garrisons. Other formerly Roman sites were reoccupied, but not refortified, which suggests that they had no military function.

Only one bridgehead on the left (northern) bank of the Danube is so far known for sure, namely the fort at Păcuiul lui Soare, but there may have been others as well. For example, the name of the site at *Grădiştea*, 3 km to the southwest from Călăraşi, derives from the Slavonic word for "fortress." A fortress may have existed there before its complete destruction by the Danube, as suggested by two folles of types A1 and A2, respective, which were found there during field surveys.[53] Other crossing points may have been located at Borcea-Pietroiu (in front of Cochirleni), Borduşani (in front of Capidava) and Şendreni (in front of Garvăn).[54] It was also been surmised that the polygonal tower from Giurgiu was built after 971, and that it had the same function as the naval base in Păcuiul lui Soare, given that it was made in the same technique (big ashlars with bands of brick). This polygonal tower lies under the north-western tower of the later fortification, which was built there in the late 14th century. However, the problem is that there are no archaeological finds from this site which could be dated to the 10th–12th centuries. An 11th-century reconstruction was also surmised for the fortress in Celei, the formerly Roman bridgehead at Sucidava, given that 11th-century coins have been found on the site. Coin finds have also been used as evidence for bridgeheads at Piua Petrii, Zimnicea and Turnu Severin, all of which have been regarded as possible anchorages for the Byzantine navy.[55] This cannot of course be excluded, but no archaeological evidence exists so far to support that idea.

After 1000, the Bulgarian fortifications in the interior, such as Odărci, Skala or Tsar Asen were also integrated into the Byzantine defense system, for they now monitored the access to Preslav and further south, to Constantinople.

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[53] Diaconu 1970, 38; Ioniţă 2005, 133.
[54] Diaconu 1970, 38.
[55] Ioniţă 2005, 51–52, 121, 132.

2. *The Danube Frontier in the 11th Century*

Jonathan Shepard has proposed the idea that after 1000, Basil II abandoned the strategy based on a very strong frontier along the Lower Danube, as the Rus' were no more a threat. The emperor left instead only few forces, in order to move resources to other Balkan regions, which were still under Bulgarian occupation. According to Shepard, this was a kind of "policy of a minimal military commitment."[56] This is in fact consistent with the abandonment of the naval defense, which is indicated among other things by the transformation, after 1000, of the fort in Păcuiul lui Soare into a fortified settlement without naval function.[57] No permanent naval force capable of preventing barbarian raids seems to have been in use throughout the existence of the Dristra/Paradunavon theme. When needed, ships could be dispatched from the naval base in Mesembria, and afer 1078, in Anchialos.[58] On the basis of a passage in the *Life of Saint Cyril the Phileote*, who was a sailor on the Danube between 1042 and 1045,[59] Vasilka Tăpkova-Zaimova has maintained that a navy must have been in existence on the Danube at that time. However, the passage in question appears to refer to a civilian fleet engaged in trade, and not to the navy.[60] The "policy of a minimal military commitment" is in stark contrast with the heavy investments in the Danube fleet during the Early and Late Roman periods.

The decline of the Byzantine naval power is in fact highlighted by the events of July 1043. The Rus' prince Vladimir of Novgorod, the son of the Kievan prince Yaroslav, launched a maritime expedition against Constantinople, probably in connection with and to the assistance of George Maniakes' rebellion. After his victory against the Pechenegs in 1036,[61] Vladimir was eager to get involved in the Byzantine affairs. When 10,000 or perhaps as many as 20,000 Rus' warriors arrived on small boats from the Dniepr into the Black Sea, approaching Constantinople, nobody expected a naval attack against the capital, which does not appear to have been defended any more by a naval force. A fleet had to be quickly improvised, and some of the enemy boats were destroyed by means of the "Greek

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[56] Shepard 1985, 254–259. Similar opinions at Haldon 1999, 64; Stephenson 2003, 114.
[57] Diaconu 1966, 369.
[58] Ahrweiler 1966, 167; Gjuzelev 1978, 52–53; Gjuzelev 1981, 18.
[59] Tăpkova-Zaimova 1980, 330.
[60] Barnea 1993 b, 589–590; Stephenson 2000, 84, 96.
[61] Curta 2006, 302–303; Spinei 2006, 181; Spinei 2009, 107.

Fire." If even the naval defense of Constantinople was neglected, what could be expected from the periphery? It is no surprise therefore that the defense of the Danube province was left to the land troops. Indeed, when they returned by land, the Rus' were attacked at Varna by troops of the Dristra theme under the command of *katepano* Katakalon Kekaumenos. They were also repelled by the same general when they landed for supplies, perhaps at Presthlavitza-Nufăru, easily accessible by boat from Selinas (Sulina) through the Saint George arm of the Danube Delta.[62]

The troubles in the Danube region appear to have been underestimated, mostly in what concerns the Pechenegs, and this would have serious consequences for the security of the frontier. After a failed 1017 by Tzotzikios, the *strategos* of Dristra, the Pechenegs returned to the Danube region in 1027, when reached Niš in the theme of Bulgaria, which appears to have been left deserted for some time after that attack. It is very probable that the same invasion affected Hungary, where a Pecheneg attack was recorded for 1028. For a while, scholars viewed this attack as targeting exclusively the western part of the Danube region (the themes of Sirmium and Bulgaria), given that no destruction dated around 1027 has been identified in the forts of Dobrudja.[63] A new examination of the archaeological and numismatic evidence, led Gheorghe Mănucu-Adameşteanu to the conclusion that Garvăn and Capidava must have also been attacked in 1027 (coins from Basil II and Constantine VIII were recovered from burned layers).[64] Both forts were repaired after destruction. At Garvăn, the southern gate was doubled on the outside. Other repairs dated to the same period have been observed at the towers 11 and 13.[65] A small hoard of *folles* from Isaccea was hidden during the attack of 1027.[66]

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[62] Skylitzes, *Constantine Monomachos*, 6 (ed. Thurn, 430–433; transl. Flusin, 357–360; transl. Wortley, 407); Attaliates, ed. Bekker, 19–20 (ed. Pérez Martín, 16–17); *Russian Primary Chronicle*, 142; Zonaras, XVII, 24 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 632–633); Bănescu 1946, 74; Ahrweiler 1966, 128–129; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 127; Shepard 1984, 147–212; Angold 1984, 12–14; Franklin, Shepard 1996, 216–217; Kostova 2006, 583–589; Spinei 2009, 108.

[63] Skylitzes, *Constantine VIII*, 2 (ed. Thurn, 373; transl. Flusin, 309; transl. Wortley, 352); Zonaras, XVII, 10.2 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 571); SRH, II, 109–111 (*Chronicon Henrici de Mügeln, 3*); *Diaconu 1970, 40–42*; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 123; Spinei 2009, 107.

[64] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 b, 88–91; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2003, 303–304; Mănucu-Adameşteanu, Poll 2006, 437–438. For Garvăn: Barnea 1971, 355; Barnea 1973, 305 (older studies linked the destruction level with the attack of 1036).

[65] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 52.

[66] Mănucu-Adameşteanu, Poll 2006, 435–437, 451–455.

The Pecheneg raids of 1032–1036 were disastrous for the entire Danube region. The attacks took advantage of the inclement weather (the horsemen crossed the frozen Danube during one of these inroads, in 1035), and were repeated at short intervals (three raids occurred in 1036 alone).[67] Destruction layers that could be dated to this period on the basis of the coin finds are documented in Tulcea,[68] Isaccea,[69] Garvăn,[70] Turcoaia,[71] Capidava,[72] Oltina,[73] Dervent,[74] Popina-Gradiščeto,[75] and Gigen.[76] Inland fortresses were also sacked: Constanţa,[77] Tsar Asen,[78] Rujno, Okorš, Kladenci,[79] Skala,[80] Odărci,[81] Šumen,[82] Kavarna, and Balčik.[83] Even Dristra was affected by the invasions of 1032–1036.[84]

The precise chronology of events depends on the dates for the anonymous folles of types B and C, which have been found in the destruction layers. According to Cécile Morrisson,[85] the B-type folles were struck between 1028 and 1034, and the C type between 1034 and 1041, while Philip Grierson[86] proposed the years 1035–1042 and 1042–1050, respectively.

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[67] Skylitzes, *Romanos III Argyros*, 10; *Michael IV Paphlagonianus*, 9, 10 (ed. Thurn, 385, 397, 399; transl. Flusin, 319, 328, 330–331; transl. Wortley, 364, 374–376); Glykas, 584 (attack dated in 1032 or 1033); Zonaras, XVII, 12.9; 14.26,30 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 579, 589, 590); Diaconu 1970, 43–49; Malamut 1995, 118; Stephenson 2000, 81; Curta 2006, 293–294; Spinei 2006, 187; Spinei 2009, 107.

[68] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 113; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2010 c, 230.

[69] Baumann, Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001, 110.

[70] Barnea 1971, 355; Barnea 1973, 308; Barnea 1980, 245; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 111–112; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 b, 94–95.

[71] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 113, 128; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2010 d, 440.

[72] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 110; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 b, 93. The old opinion sustained the final destruction in 1036 (Diaconu 1970, 44; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 124; Florescu, Covacef 1988–1989, 244), but later numismatic discoveries have shown that it was peopled until the Pecheneg invasion of 1047: Custurea 1995–1996, 301.

[73] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 39; Custurea 2000–2001, 590; Custurea 2009, 614.

[74] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 111; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2003, 305; Damian, Vasile 2010, 339.

[75] Mănucu-Adameşteanu, Jordanov 2002, 126.

[76] Mănucu-Adameşteanu, Jordanov 2002, 130; Borisov 2007, 75.

[77] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1991, 323.

[78] Dimova 1993, 65, 73; Atanasov 2003, 291.

[79] Atanasov 1991, 84, 88; Atanasov 2003, 291; Mănucu-Adameşteanu, Poll 2006, 439.

[80] Yotov 1995, 182; Yotov, Atanasov 1998, 198; Atanasov 2003, 291.

[81] Mănucu-Adameşteanu, Poll 2006, 438; Dončeva-Petkova 2007, 644.

[82] Žekova 2005, 169–170.

[83] Mănucu-Adameşteanu, Jordanov 2002, 130–131.

[84] Angelova 1987, 94 (the destruction is attested by an anonymous B type coin found in a burned level).

[85] Morrisson 1970, 586–600.

[86] Grierson 1973, 634.

Grierson's chronology was accepted by some,[87] but Gheorghe Mănucu-Adameşteanu has demonstrated that the date 1050–1060, which Grierson advanced for the D type does not match what it is known about the history of the Danube region in those years. As a consequence, the chronology of the B and C types must also be wrong.[88] Furthermore, the forts with destruction layers dated by means of B-type coins, or with no C-type coins whatsoever, must have been the victims of the attacks of 1032–1035 (see Fig. 8): Dristra, Oltina, Popina-Gradiščeto, Vetren, Gigen, Skala, Tsar Asen, Okorš, Rujno, Kladenci, Kavarna, and Balčik. At some point during that same interval, a coin hoard was buried in Središte, which included 34 *miliaresia* and 27 *folles*, the last coins being B-type specimens. The conclusion is that the attacks of 1032–1035 were directed mostly at the region near Dristra and from there to Preslav, while the invasions of 1036 struck especially northern Dobrudja (see Fig. 9).[89] For this reason it is more probable that the fort at Dervent was attacked in 1035, and not in 1036. The abandonment of that fortress left undefended one of the most important fords, which was only at a small distance from Dristra. Among forts attacked in 1032–1036, those from Gigen, Skala, Rujno, Tsar Asen, Odărci, Kladenci, and Okorš were also abandoned. Furthermore forts in the interior were not restored at all.

The Pechenegs were bent on sacking Dristra and its hinterland. Next they moved for more plunder to northern Dobrudja, which had until then been spared by their depredations. All raids taking place between 1032 and 1036 had serious demographic consequences. Many settlements in northern Bulgaria were destroyed during the first half of the 11th century, most probably between 1032 and 1036. For instance, in the district of Silistra, out of eight forts and 72 settlements, only three survived, while in the district of Dobrič only 11 out of 121.[90]

The disaster of 1032–1036 may be blamed on Emperor Romanus III's failed policies. His grand strategy was not based upon a lucid analysis of the reality, being driven only by the emperor's quest for glory for himself and for his soldiers.[91] Michael Psellos wrote in this respect that: "setting his heart on military glory, he prepared for war against the barbarians,

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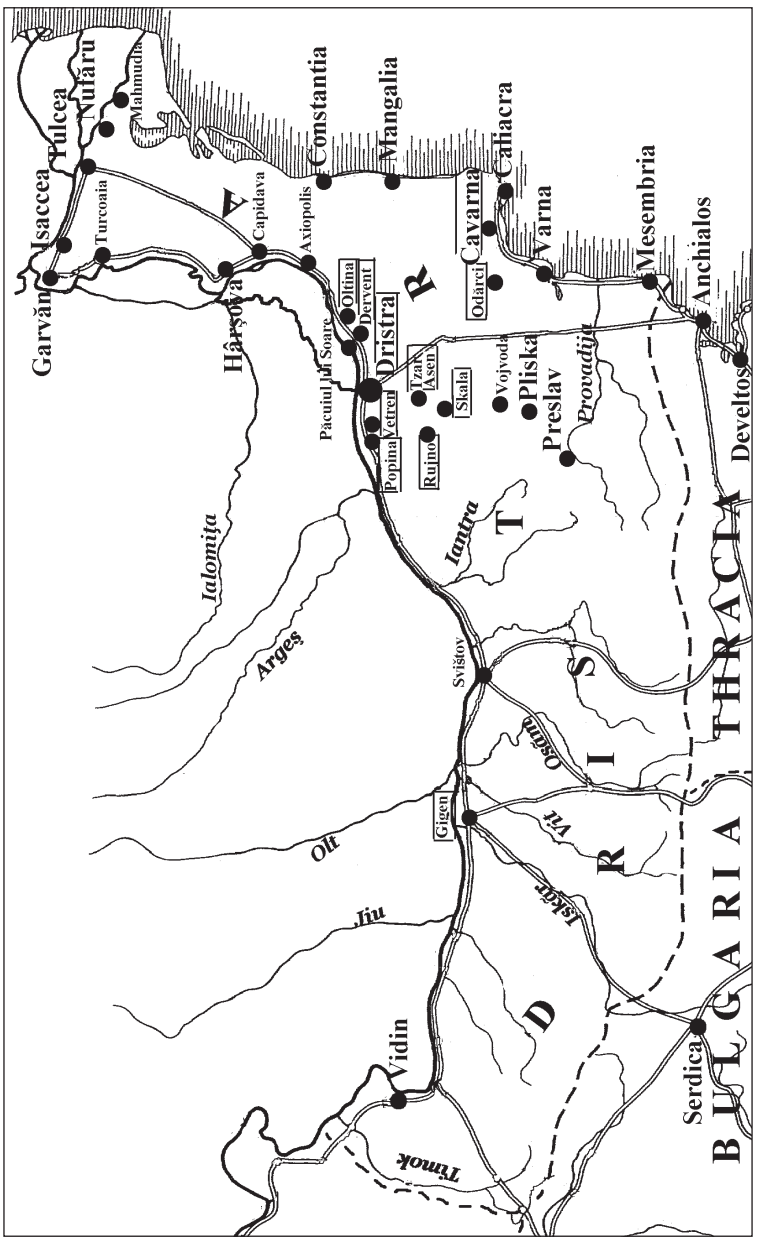
[87] For instance Atanasov 2003, 289–298.

[88] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 b, 107–108; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2003, 307–308.

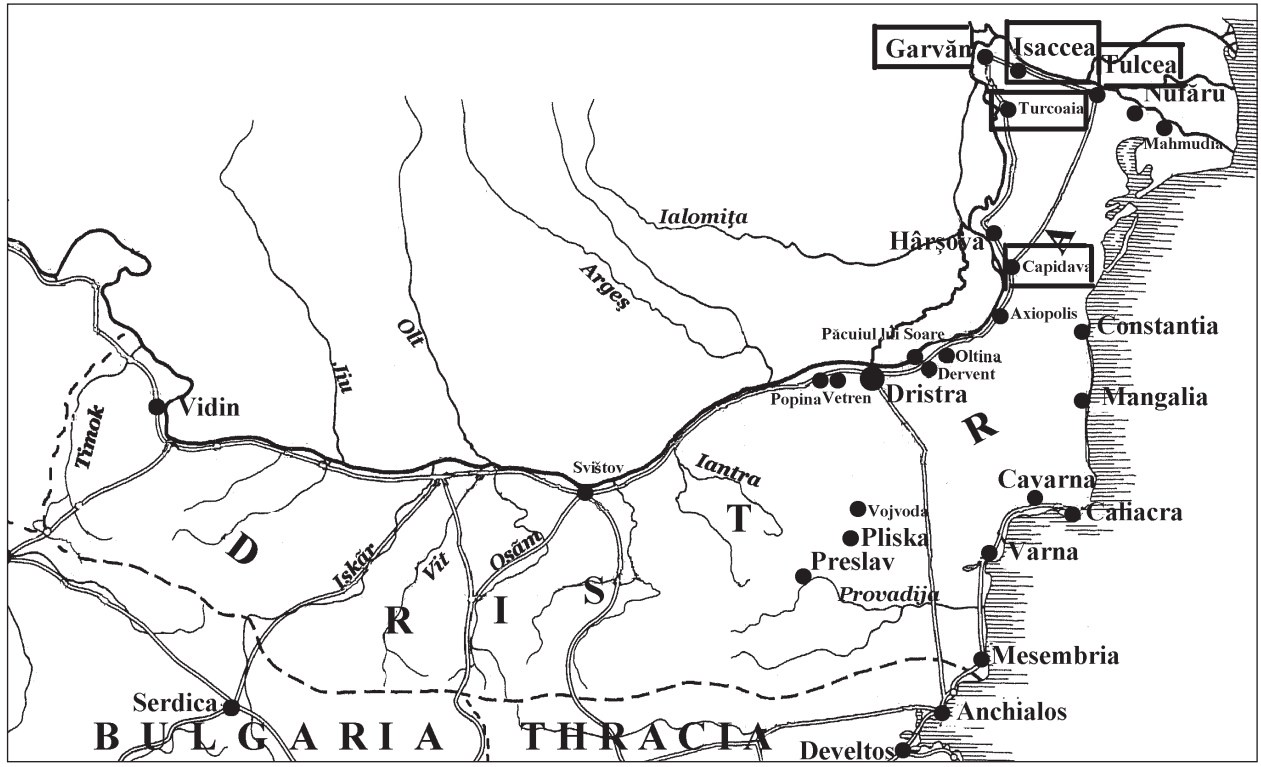
[89] Atanasov 2003, 291–295; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2003, 301–308. For the coin hoard of Središte see Parušev 1993, 164; Custurea, Talmaţchi 2011, 350–351.

[90] Borisov 2007, 74–75.

[91] Shepard 2002, 77.



8. The fortifications affected by the attacks of 1032–1035



9. The fortifications affected by the attack of 1036

east and west. Victory over the western barbarians, however easy, seemed no great triumph, but an attack on the barbarians of the east, he thought, would win him fame."[92] The neglect of the western part of the empire, to which fewer troops were allocated, was simply an invitation for trouble from the Pechenegs.

Following the death of Basil II in 1025, the implementation of peacetime policies caused the emperors Constantine VIII (1025–1028), Romanos III (1028–1034) and Michael IV (1034–1041) to cut funds for the army, even though the state budget increased considerably as a consequence of the expansion of the urban economy and successive tax raises. Basil II had spent huge resources for an army of more than 250,000 men[93] which had been permanently on campaign for almost half a century. After 1025, however, there were no more permanent troops in the forts.[94] On the other hand, the protection granted to estates owned by *stratiotai* was removed, although those small landowners had been an essential component of the army during the 9th–10th centuries. The measure, on the other hand, encouraged the commutation of the military obligations into cash payments, as funds were now needed for civilian expenses (some of them completely useless, such gifts for favorites), and not for the building of a well maintained military force. The new professional army came into being only during the reign of Constantine IX (1042–1055), but it became efficient only during the reign of Alexios I Comnenos (1081–1118).[95]

Constantine IX also introduced to all border provinces the dukes or the *katepanoi*, the office of commanders of major units of the Byzantine army.[96] The theme of Dristra was no exception, as it received its first *katepano* in the person of Katakalon Kekaumenos, in 1042–1045, at the beginning of Constantine IX's reign. Appointing dukes or *katepanoi* to the themes actually meant the transfer of *tagmata* (army corps of professional military) to those provinces, which now relied on those military units for their defense, instead of locally recruited troops.[97] A duke was in fact the commander of the *tagma* garrisoned within a given territory. In other words, the presence of a duke or a *katepano* (the two terms were often used interchangeably) implies the existence of professional troops.

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[92] Michael Psellos, III, 7 (transl. Sewter, 42).
[93] Treadgold 1995, 285.
[94] Cheynet 2005, 109.
[95] Ostrogorsky 1956, 346–347, 354–355; Oikonomides 1976, 141–147; Lemerle 1977, 251–312; Angold 1984, 62–65; Cheynet 1991, 64–73.
[96] Cheynet 1985, 193.
[97] Cheynet 1985, 194.

From an archaeological point of view, this is confirmed by the sudden appearance in a particular region of a great number of gold and silver coins, which were sent from the center as payments for the troops. This is in fact the reason for which, unlike other provinces in the interior, such coins appear in forts on the Danube in surprisingly larger numbers than the folles.[98] The total number of troops stationed in the theme of Dristra may be estimated at 5,000.[99]

Without a fleet, devoid even of an effective fortification system, and with fewer soldiers, the Lower Danube region thus required a different kind of defense after the disastrous invasions of 1032–1036. The new policy was based on the idea of maintaining peaceful relations with the Pechenegs to whom payments were not made and with whom free trade was encouraged. The two offices of *kommerkiarioi* in the Danube region—Presthlavitza and Dristra—were established to monitor the trade with the Pechenegs in Moldavia and Walachia. It is important to note that two such offices existed in a relatively small area. By comparison, there were four offices of *kommerkiarioi* on the western and northern coasts of the Black Sea, at Constantinople, Develtos, Mesembria and Cherson.[100] Paul Stephenson has noted that this change in policy toward the Pechenegs must have been initiated by John Orphanotrophous, Michael IV's minister.[101] The new policy was implemented through a peace treaty with the Pechenegs which was concluded in 1036.[102]

The new policy proved to be successful over the following decade, and was most likely responsible for the relative prosperity of the cities in Paradunavon. The Pechenegs lived in peace with the Byzantines when Katakalon Kekaumenos was appointed *katepano* of Dristra (later on, a Pecheneg called Koulinos would remember that at the time those people—Pechenegs and Byzantines—intermingled).[103] Nevertheless, the policy failed when large number of Pechenegs moved into the empire, first as allies, then as enemies. The conflict between a commander named Kegen and the paramount chief named Tyrach spilled into the Empire, when the latter sought refuge in the theme of Dristra in 1045, together with 20,000 followers. The Pecheneg refugees first moved into a swampy area, most

98 Frankopan 1997, 30–39.
99 Treadgold 1995, 84.
100 Antoniadis-Bibicou 1963, 208–209.
101 Stephenson 2000, 80–83, 114. See also Angold 1984, 1–11; Haldon 1999, 91.
102 Diaconu 1970, 51–55; Malamut 1995, 119.
103 Skylitzes, *Constantine Monomachos*, 22 (ed. Thurn, 469; transl. Flusin, 387; transl. Wortley, 438).

likely Balta Ialomiţei or Borcea (itself a name of Turkic origin), not far from Dristra. A linguistic study has shown to this day Balta Ialomiţei is the area with the highest concentration of place names and river names of Turkic origin (Pecheneg or Cuman) in the entire Walachia. Besides Dervent, no less than three other such names exist in the immediate vicinity of Păcuiul lui Soare—Bugeac, Canlia and Galiţa.[104]

Kegen was eager to put his men to the service of the Byzantine Empire, and the *katepano* Michael decided to send the Pecheneg chief to Constantinople, to the emperor. In the capital, Kegen was baptized with Emperor Constantine IX as sponsor at the baptismal font, and was given a new name (John) and the title of *patrikios*. He became an ally of the empire (*symmachos*). Kegen's Pechenegs were all baptized in the waters of the Danube, received land and three unidentified fortifications.[105] The purpose of this colonization was twofold: to stop further Pecheneg attacks and to use them against their rivals beyond the Danube.[106] In that respect, the Pechenegs became a kind of *stratiotai* who owed military service in exchange for the use of that land. The seals with the inscription Ιοάννες μαγìστρος καὶ ἄρχον Πατζινακìας (one found at Silistra, another one preserved in a museum in München) belonged to Kegen.[107] They point to a later moment in the Pecheneg chieftain's career, for the title of *magistros* was higher than that of *patrikios*. The term *Patzinakia* indicates the appearance of an autonomous Pecheneg territory, located somewhere in the Danube region. This territory remained under the control of the empire, because the title of *archon* was given only to rulers of autonomous regions on the periphery. As a matter of fact, Kegen's seals are the first official source using the title of *archon* for the Danube region.

Two large coin hoards of *miliaresia* discovered in Gigen may represent the booty gathered by Pecheneg warriors. One of them includes 710 coins (Basil II and Constantine VIII: 113; Romanos III: 1; Constantine IX: 596), while the other has 23 coins struck for Constantine IX. Both hoards were

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104 Iorga 1937, 42; Conea, Donat 1958, 158–159; Diaconu 1977 b, 62–63.

105 Skylitzes, *Constantine Monomachos*, 16 (ed. Thurn, 456–457; transl. Flusin, 378; transl. Wortley, 427–428); Attaliates, ed. Bekker, 30–31 (ed. Pérez Martín, 24); Zonaras, XVII, 26.1–9 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 641–642); Necşulescu 1937, 125–127; Stănescu 1966, 51; Diaconu 1970, 51–61; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 126; Angold 1984, 15; Malamut 1995, 119–123; Stephenson 2000, 90–91; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 b, 98–99; Krumova 2005, 210–212; Curta 2006, 296; Spinei 2006, 188, 190; Spinei 2009, 108–109.

106 Diaconu 1970, 57–61; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 126.

107 Jordanov 1992 c, 79–82; Jordanov 2003 a, 138–142, nr. 59. 1; Jordanov 2006, 201–206, nr. 307; Jordanov 2009, 465–466, nr. 1380; Spinei 2006, 191; Spinei 2009, 109.

buried at a time when the fort, which was destroyed in 1032–1035, had already been abandoned.[108] The most significant archaeological evidence for the beginning of the sedentization of the Pechenegs in this area comes from a cemetery excavated in Odărci (535 graves). Inhumations began there during the reign of Constantine IX, first on the site of fort destroyed in 1032–1036. Many graves present clear Pecheneg features such as horse bones or leaf-shaped pendants; trepanation was observed on 53 skulls, and the individuals in questions must have been Pechenegs. Some graves are certainly Christian, as Kegen's men were baptized in the Danube.[109] Another cemetery is known from Pliska, which included 40 graves dug into the ruins of a church destroyed during the Pecheneg attack of 1036. A group of three graves is also known from the ruins of the palatial compound in Pliska. Artifacts associated with those graves are typically Pecheneg, much like those in another cemetery from Preslav (20 graves with horse gear and belt fittings).[110] However, inhumation in cemeteries is unknown among the Pechenegs living outside the empire. Once they settled in the Byzantine province and were converted to Christianity, they apparently adapted to the burial customs of the native population, and it is probable that mixed marriages occurred as well. The next generation descended from those Pechenegs, who were settled in 1046, would participate in the rebellion of 1072. Pendants of Pecheneg origin were found at Dristra and in forts such as Păcuiul lui Soare, Garvăn, Isaccea, Nufăru, Mahmudia, and even at Varna. Other such objects are known from graves in the countryside (Istria, Târguşor, Valea Dacilor, Vălnari). The memory of this population was preserved by two place names, *Pecineaga* and *Peceneaga*, in the Constanţa and Tulcea counties, respectively.[111]

Settling barbarians (Carpi, Goths) on the Roman soil in the Danube region was a practice known since Late Antiquity. In fact, there are striking parallels between the Pecheneg settlement and that of the Goths in 376.[112] Like the Gothic *foederati*, the Pechenegs quickly turned into enemies and caused much trouble over the following decade. Relying on those unreliable barbarians for the defense of the theme of Dristra must have been a desperate measure to cope with the lack of local resources.

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[108] Metcalf 1979, 55; Penčev 1998, 76–95; Mănucu-Adameşteanu, Jordanov 2002, 130; Oberländer-Târnoveanu 2003, 392.

[109] Dončeva-Petkova 2007, 644–658.

[110] Dončeva-Petkova 2003, 244–258; Michailova 2003, 259–266; Krumova 2005, 215–216; Schmitt 2006, 482; Dončeva-Petkova 2007, 657.

[111] Madgearu 2003 a, 52–55; Spinei 2006, 200.

[112] Tăpkova-Zaimova 1975 b, 617–618; Schmitt 2006, 477.

The Pechenegs were definitely regarded as important in the defense of the province, since they were given three fortresses and an autonomous territory. Assigning of fortresses to autonomous allies had already been used at that time by Emperor Constantine IX. He had applied the same measures in the theme of Armeniakon (northern Asia Minor), where several estates and fortifications were granted to the Norman mercenaries, who were regarded as *symmachoi* like the Pechenegs, but who would later rebel against the imperial authorities.[113] Grants of forts became so common that Michael VII tried to slow down the process by prohibiting the transfer for those forts through inheritance and by forcing those to whom they had been granted to accept financial responsibility for the repairs. All this clearly shows that the imperial power was in no position to maintain the entire system of fortifications, and preferred instead to grant them to various warlords who had the capability and the interest to take care of them, even though, at least theoretically, the emperor was still the owner of those forts.[114] This "leasing" of the frontier defense began with the Pechenegs on the Danube.

Following the rise of Patzinakia, the Danube ceased to be a clear-cut frontier between Byzantium and the barbarians. The Danube lands now turned into a transition zone, a periphery in which the population and the mode of living were half barbarian.[115] John Haldon has argued that in the region of this permeable frontier the Byzantine government introduced a deliberate policy of depopulation.[116] However, the archaeological evidence shows the opposite. True, a certain degree of depopulation may be surmised, but only for the 12th century, when some settlements were abandoned. However, even in the 12th century, the city of Dristra continued to prosper, at least according to al-Idrisi's testimony (to whom the city was known as *Daristar*).[117]

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[113] Magdalino 1997, 27–29.

[114] Oikonomides 1966, 413–417.

[115] Independent from Haldon 1999, 63–64, I wrote of a "permeable frontier" in Madgearu 1999b, and my idea was then picked up by Stephenson 2003, 128.

[116] Haldon 1999, 64.

[117] Al-Idrisi (ed. Jaubert, 386; ed. Miller, 129); Tomaschek 1886, 300–301; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 164–165; Baraschi 1981, 316; Shepard 1979, 233–237. Chiriac 1993, 447–454 believed that Linokastro, another fort mentioned by al-Idrisi may have located north of Hârşova. The name means "wool town" and may be compared with the local placename Cetatea Oii (Sheep Fort). Chiriac appears to have built his theory on the wrong interpretation advanced by Brătescu 1920, 29, who had located Linokastro in Dobrudja, even though it is quite clear from the text that the town in question was near Rosokastron (now

After becoming an ally of the emperor, Kegen decided to use this advantage to take revenge on Tyrach, and he launched an attack in 1047 across the Danube against the Pechenegs living north of the Danube. This action only caused the migration of more Pechenegs into the empire. Another factor contribution to this population movement was the pressure of the Uzes from the east, who in turn had been driven away by the Cumans. The Pechenegs crossing the Danube in great numbers could not be stopped by a fleet of 100 triremes sent from Constantinople, since, again, the river had frozen. According to Skylitzes, the Danube had no defense whatsoever. Sources indicate that as many as 800,000 Pechenegs made the crossing, but this is evidently an exaggeration. Faced with this crisis, the *katepano* Michael asked for reinforcements from Constantinople. They came under the command of Constantine Arianites and Basil Monachos (the dukes of Adrianople and Bulgaria, respectively), but the Pechenegs were eventually forced to withdraw because of a disease to which many of them fell victims. The survivors were settled in the region between Niš and Sofia. Tyrach and some of his men were baptized, receiving offices in the Byzantine army, like Kegen. Those measures were intended to pacify the region and to turn the Pechenegs into a reliable and sedentary population.[118] The seal found in Vetren confirms the integration of Tyrach into the Byzantine military structures.[119] However, the policy ultimately failed, because Tyrach's Pechenegs rebelled when they were sent against the Seljuks in 1049, and in the process created havoc in Thrace and Macedonia for the subsequent years until 1053. They established their base of operations in a region rich in grazing fields, woods and water called *Hekaton Bounoi*, which was located north and east of Preslav. Sent for negotiations, Kegen was killed by the Pechenegs. After the battle at Preslav, in which the duke of Bulgaria Basil Monachos was killed, Constantine IX concluded another peace for thirty years peace, which stipulated payments of stipends to the Pechenegs.[120]

Rusokastro, 25 km to the west from Burgas)(Al-Idrisi, ed. Jaubert, 388; ed. Miller, 132). See Tomaschek 1886, 315–316 and Grămadă 1930, 215.

[118] Skylitzes, *Constantine Monomachos*, 17 (ed. Thurn, 458–459, 465–473; transl. Flusin, 379–380; transl. Wortley, 429–430); Attaliates, ed. Bekker, 30–35 (ed. Pérez Martín, 24–27); Zonaras, XVII, 26.10–22 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 642–644); Necşulescu 1937, 127–128; Bănescu 1946, 128–129; Stănescu 1966, 52; Diaconu 1970, 62–65; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 127–129; Stephenson 2000, 90–91; Krumova 2005, 211–212; Kostova 2006, 589–590; Curta 2006, 296, 306; Spinei 2006, 190–192; Schmitt 2006, 479–480; Krsmanović 2009, 77; Spinei 2009, 108–110.

[119] Atanasov, Jordanov 1994, 41; Spinei 2006, 191.

[120] Skylitzes, *Constantine Monomachos*, 21–25, 28 (ed. Thurn, 465–475; transl. Flusin, 384–392; transl. Wortley, 434–443); Attaliates, ed. Bekker, 37–43 (ed. Pérez Martín, 28–33);

Tyrach's attack of 1047 (see Fig. 10) is responsible for destruction in the Danube region and for the abandonment of Capidava (where the most recent coins are those of Constantine IX)[121] and Preslav (where the imperial administration was restored in the 1060s, as seals from the administrative building demonstrate).[122] Destruction layers dated to that same time have been found in Garvăn, where anonymous folles of type D appear in several sunken-floored buildings that were apparently burned down.[123] The same circumstances may have been responsible for the abandonment of the fort in Tulcea.[124] One of the largest coin hoards found in Paradunavon and dated to this period, which consists of 106 gold specimens (the most recent from 1042/1055), was buried in Garvăn, most likely during this attack.[125] Other coin hoards dated to this period have been discovered in Păcuiul lui Soare and Popina.[126] On the former site, the gate was blocked by means of a wall made of recycled materials.[127] The fort at Krivina was destroyed during those Pecheneg invasions and was abandoned until the early 13th century.[128] Both Varna and Mesembria suffered as well.[129] Following the raids, a part of the population from the lowlands moved to higher elevation on the southern slopes of the Stara Planina Mountains. The archaeological excavations revealed a cluster of settlements in that area, all dated to mid-11th century (one of them, Djadovo, was completely excavated).[130]

The permeability of the Danube frontier allowed the settlement in 1059 of another Pecheneg group, which was fleeing the Uzes. According to

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Kekaumenos, 64, 67 (ed. Spadaro, 96/97–98/99, 100/101); Zonaras, XVII, 26.23–24 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 644); Matthew of Edessa, I, 95 (ed. Dostourian, 80); Necşulescu 1937, 129; Diaconu 1970, 62–65, 73–76; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 127–128; Kazhdan 1977, 65–77 (who clarified the date at which Kegen's Pechenegs were settled); Angold 1984, 15–17; Malamut 1995, 119–128; Madgearu 1999 a, 435–436; Stephenson 2000, 91–92; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 b, 100–105; Curta 2006, 297; Spinei 2006, 194–197; Schmitt 2006, 484–485; Jordanov 2009, 393. For *Hekaton Bounoi* see: Grămadă 1925–1926, 88–89; Diaconu 1970, 66–69, 73–76; Madgearu 2003 a, 51–52; Schmitt 2006, 482.

121 Custurea 1995–1996, 301, 307; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 110; Curta 2006, 296.

122 Jordanov 1982 b, 41; Jordanov 1987 a, 95.

123 Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 120–121.

124 Oberländer-Târnoveanu 2003, 389; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 271, 411 (tabel 13), 412 (tabel 14); Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2010 c, 229–230.

125 Barnea 1971, 356; Metcalf 1979, 75; Barnea 1980, 274; Vîlcu 2008, 87–96 (who indicated the right date of the coins, against the opinion of Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 119, 127).

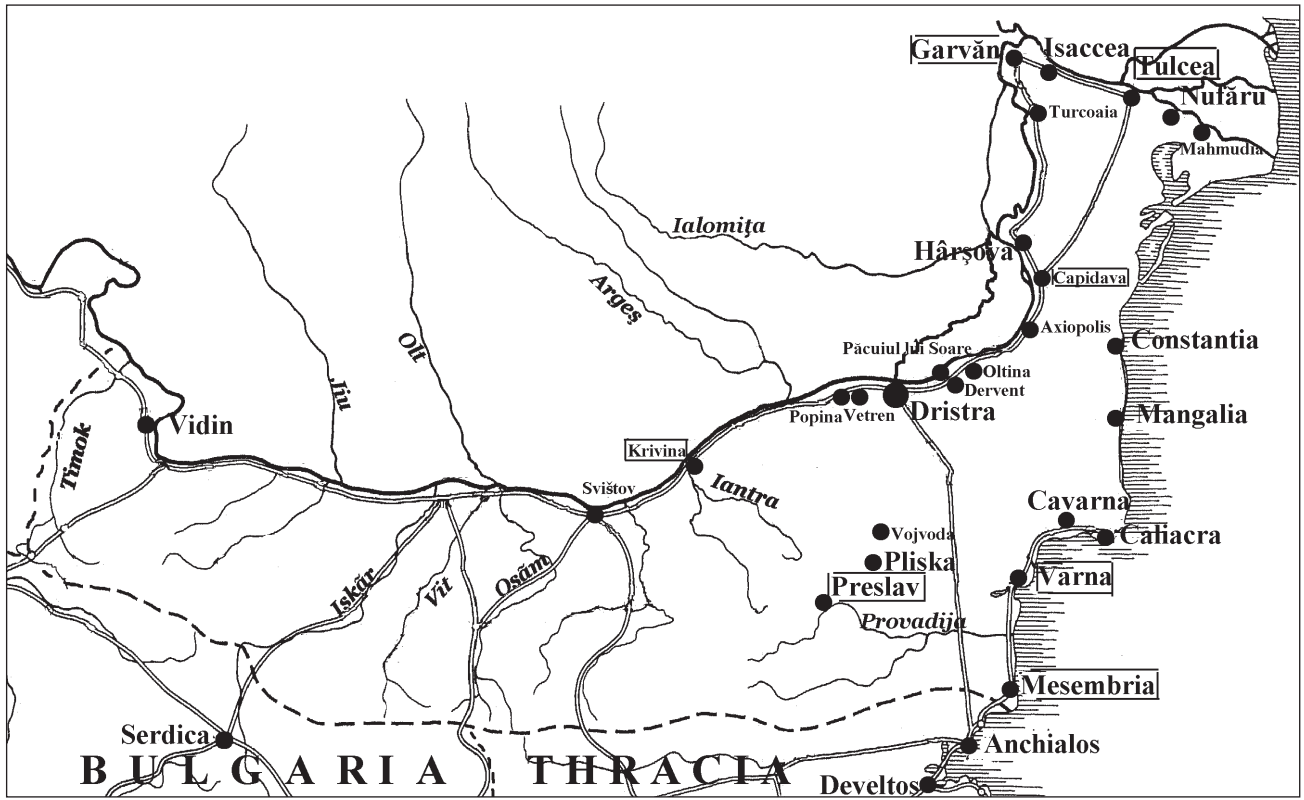
126 Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 119; Mănucu-Adameşteanu, Jordanov 2002, 129.

127 Condurachi, Barnea, Diaconu 1967, 191; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 118.

128 Diaconu 1992 a, 180; Curta 2006, 297.

129 Mănucu-Adameşteanu, Jordanov 2002, 131.

130 Borisov 2007, 76–78.



10. The fortifications affected by the attack of 1047

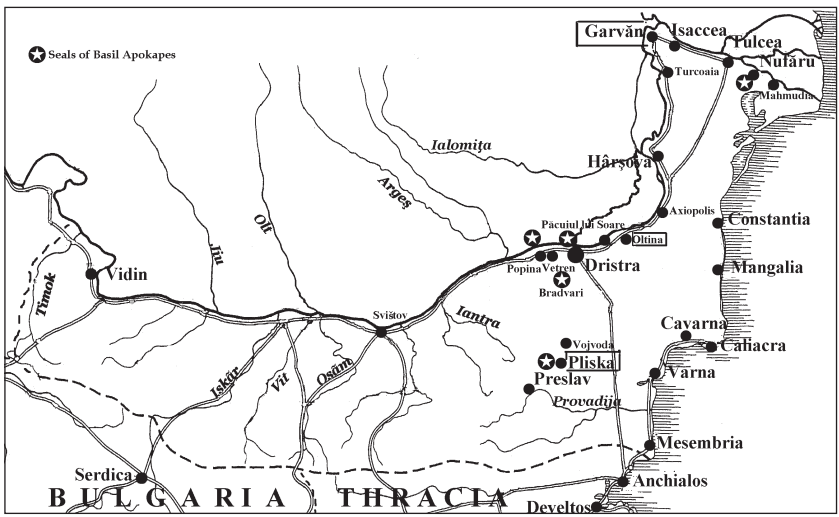
Michael Psellos, "by their plundering and ravaging [the Uzes] compelled them [i.e., the Pechenegs] to abandon their own homes and seek new ones. So, at a time when the Ister was frozen over, they crossed as though on dry land and emigrated from the Trans-Danubian territories to our province. The whole nation was transported, bag and baggage, over our borders, incapable of living at peace themselves, and bound to spread consternation among their former neighbours." The Pechenegs seem to have taken advantage of an attack, which Andrew I, King of Hungary (1046–1061) launched on the theme of Bulgaria. The attack stopped after negotiations opened with the emperor in Serdica. Meanwhile, Isaac I Comnenos defeated the Pechenegs (September 1059). In the course of those events, a Pecheneg chief named Selté took a fortress, which Petre Diaconu identified with Loveč. However, if we are to take the account of the continuator of Skylitzes at face value, the fort in question must have been somewhere on the Danube. Petre Ş. Năsturel proposed the fort at Turcoaia, which fits the description given in the source—a "steep rock" next to "swamps of the Ister." However, other sites such as Măcin or Hârşova may be equally be regarded as good matches. At any rate, it is important to note that the Pechenegs apparently had no problems crossing the river and that one of their chieftains was able to take a fort on the frontier.[131]

When the Uzes crossed the Danube in 1065, they were met by the joint forces of Nikephoros Botaneiates and Basil Apokapes. According to Attaliates and Michael Glykas, 600,000 Uzes crossed the Danube, but this is undoubtedly an exaggeration.[132] The figure of 60,000 given by Zonaras is probably closer to reality. Another detail from Glykas's account deserves more attention: in the invasion took part the "most noble of the Pechenegs" (τῶν Πατζινακῶν οἱ ευγενέστεροι). This seems to imply that at the head of the coalition of 1065 were some Pecheneg chiefs.[133] The invasion of 1065 created more havoc in Paradunavon. All sources agreed on the large number of invaders, against whom it was necessary to summon an army from the East, under the command of Basil Apokapes. Because even

[131] Attaliates, ed. Bekker, 67 (ed. Pérez Martín, 51–52); Skylitzes Continuatus, 106–107; Glykas, 602; Michael Psellos, VII, 67 (transl. Sewter, 241–242); Anna Comnena, III, 8.6 (transl. Sewter, 122–123); Zonaras, XVIII, 6.1–5 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 671); Matthew of Edessa, II, 5 (ed. Dostourian, 90–91). For the attack see: Iorga 1937, 81; Necşulescu 1939, 185; Gyóni 1943–1944, 88–92; Stănescu 1966, 53; Diaconu 1970, 76–78; Malamut 1995, 128; Curta 2006, 298; Spinei 2009, 110, 112.

[132] Necşulescu 1939, 195; Malamut 1995, 129; Spinei 2009, 197.

[133] Glykas, 605; Attaliates, ed. Bekker, 83 (ed. Pérez Martín, 63).



11. The fortifications affected by the attack of 1065

with that, it was apparently not possible to contain the invasion, negotiations were initiated to convince the Uzes to return to the lands north of the Danube. They were convinced to do so only when pestilence and starvation killed many of them.[134] Again, the archaeological excavations have confirmed the data from the written sources (see Fig. 11). Destructions that may be dated in 1065 are documented in Garvăn (where two coin hoards were buried, with a total of 113 *nomismata* and 4 *miliaresia*)[135] and Oltina.[136] We know that the fort in Nufăru put up some resistance, for the local commander received a message from Basil Apokapes during the operations. Southern Paradunavon was also affected. The series of coin finds in Pliska stops at this particular moment (see chapter II), and coin hoards were buried under the same circumstances in Păcuiul lui Soare and 23 August (Constanţa county).[137] That three seals of Basil Apokapes alone were found within a relatively short distance from each other in

[134] Attaliates, ed. Bekker, 83–85 (ed. Pérez Martín, 63–64); Skylitzes Continuatus, 114–115; Zonaras, XVIII, 9.1–9 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 678–679); Necşulescu 1939, 193–196; Stănescu 1966, 54; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 133–135; Malamut 1995, 129; Spinei 2006, 286–287; Spinei 2009, 114.

[135] Ştefan, Barnea 1967, 29; Diaconu 1970, 79–80; Barnea 1971, 356; Barnea 1973, 292, 305, 315; Barnea 1980, 245; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 119–120, 127, 128, 213–216; Vîlcu 2008, 89.

[136] Custurea 2000–2001, 589, 593.

[137] Diaconu 1976 b, 235–239; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 128.

Silistra, Bradvari, and Popina, is remarkable. Those messages show that troops were sent to the west from, perhaps because the duke expected an attack from the valley of the Mostiştea, at a point of crossing in use from the Antiquity and throughout the Middle Ages.[138] Popina is in fact located just 25 km to the west from Dristra, Bradvari at 23 km south-west of Dristra, on the way to Pliska. The Uzes may have also used the fords at Dervent, Garvăn, and perhaps also Isaccea.

The weakness of the Byzantine domination on the Lower Danube results from the secession of the Danube province for about two decades, between 1072 and 1091. While several centrifugal movements and rebellions are known to have taken place in the Empire at that time, in this case the Pechenegs played a key role both at the beginning and in the course of the mutiny, which started as a reaction to the lack of protection from the central government and deteriorated into complete secession.[139] During the secession, the Byzantine frontier, if one can still speak of such a thing, was limited to some points in northern Dobrudja, foremost among them being Isaccea, the new residence of Paradunavon after the occupation of Dristra by Tatós. When Nikephoros III Botaneiates became emperor in 1078, since he had previously been a *katepano* of Paradunavon, the relations between the native inhabitants and the Pechenegs began to change. Attaliates reports that a delegation of "Scythians" (an archaic name no doubt referring to people from the lands once within the Roman province of Scythia Minor) came to the emperor to ask for forgiveness and to promise that they would never again attack the empire together with the Pechenegs. This delegation may be dated to the fall of 1080.[140] Attaliates' account shows that the local population broke the alliance with the Pechenegs, because the initial reason for the rebellion had disappeared after the dethronement of Michael VII. This change of attitude may have also been influenced by the fact that the new emperor was a former duke in Paradunavon, whom many in the region must have known personally.

Archaeologically, this period is characterized by the interruption of the coin series in Garvăn, Turcoaia, and Hârşova—all three sites without any finds of anonymous folles of the K type, which are dated between

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[138] Developing an idea from Iorga 1937, 90, Iosipescu 1994, 257, 259 suggested that the so-called *Bordoni*, a warrior group attested in 1187, were located on the Mostiştea valley, because their name derived from the Slavic *brod* ("ford") that could be linked with to Slavic *most* ("bridge").

[139] Stănescu 1966, 60–61; Tanaşoca 1973, 80.

[140] Attaliates, ed. Bekker, 302–303 (ed. Pérez Martín, 216); Skylitzes Continuatus, 185; Stănescu 1966, 59–60; Meško 2011, 137.

1085 and 1092. Turcoaia was reoccupied shortly after that, as indicated by coins struck from 1093–1094 onwards. In Garvăn, the settlement outside the walls was abandoned in the 1080s. A coin hoard of 15 *nomismata* struck for Emperors Romanos IV and Michael VII was found inside the fort.[141] The fort at Mahmudia may have also been abandoned after 1072, since the most recent coins from that site are issues of Romanus IV.[142] The defense system in northern Dobrudja was therefore seriously damaged, with only Isaccea and Nufăru remaining in operation (see fig. 12). Farther to the south, the fort at Popina was destroyed around 1080,[143] while that in Oltina continued in use, as indicated by a seal of Gregory Mavrokatakalon dated between 1087 and 1091. The fort in Păcuiul lui Soare was apparently spared, as no destruction layer dated to 1070–1080 has been archaeologically identified. Nonetheless, the general anxiety in the area is reflected in the burial of a small hoard 33 coins, which was found in a sunken-floored building.[144] The lack of any traces of destruction may be explained as indicating that together with Dristra, Păcuiul lui Soare had fallen earlier on into the hands of the rebels.

The destruction may also be attributed to the invasion of those whom Anna Comnena calls "Scythic people"—either Cumans, or another Pecheneg group. The newcomers crossed the Danube and immediately opened negotiations with Tatós and two other chiefs, named Sesthlav and Satza, who, according to Anna Comnena, controlled "Vitzina and the remaining areas."[145] It is not altogether clear whether both Sesthlav and Satza were rulers of Vitzina, or only one of them. While *Sesthlav* is definitely a Slavic name (perhaps Časlav), *Satza* is of Turkic origin. A Cuman prince called *Sakz'* is mentioned in the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, as having been killed in battle with Vladimir Monomakh at Bela Vezha in 1093. The name may

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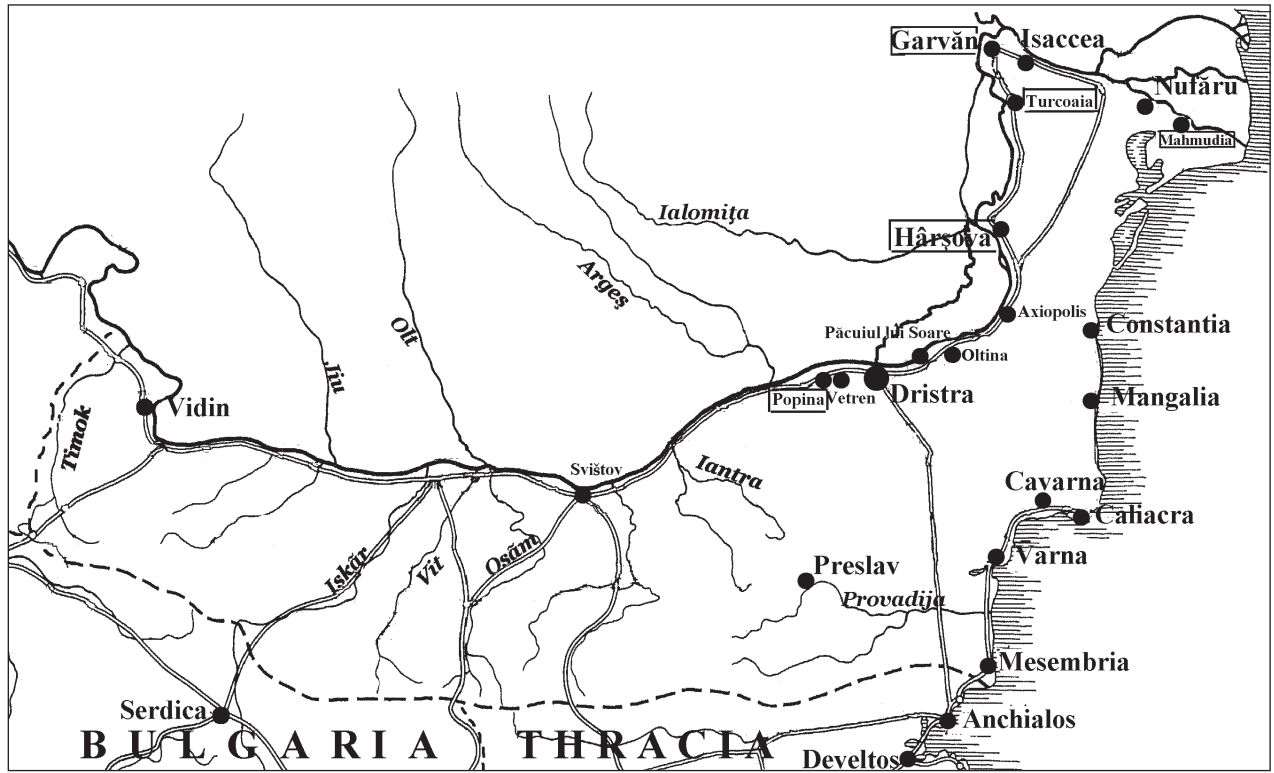
[141] Barnea 1971, 356; Metcalf 1979, 75; Barnea 1980, 245; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1995, 354–356; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 134–136, 216–218; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2010 a, 194; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2010 d, 446.

[142] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1992, 400; Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1998, 80; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 128–129; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2010 e, 226, 228.

[143] Mănucu-Adameşteanu, Jordanov 2002, 127.

[144] Conovici, Lungu 1980, 397–402; Custurea, Talmaţchi 2011, 308. Other coin hoards were hidden at Belene, Silistra, Giurgengik and Plopeni (Constanţa county): Metcalf 1979, 75–76; Custurea, Talmaţchi 2011, 53, 313, 330–331.

[145] Anna Comnena, VI, 14.1 (trad. Sewter, 212): a "Scythian tribe, having suffered incessant pillaging at the hands of Sarmatians, left home and came down to the Danube"; Brătianu 1935, 16; Necşulescu 1937, 139–144; Gyóni 1944, 87–100; Diaconu 1970, 112–115; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 137–146; Cihodaru 1978–1979, 285; Malamut 1995, 130.



12. The fortifications affected by the rebellion of 1072–1091

thus have been in use among members of the Pecheneg or Cuman aristocracy, and it is quite possible that Satza mentioned by Anna Comnena is one and the same person as that later be killed by Vladimir Monomakh.[146] The place name *Isaccea* has in fact the same origin, and some have even suggested that the name derives from *Satza*.[147] The Tatar name *Saqčy* first appears on coins struck from 1286 onwards in the name of the Mongol ruler Nogai (who had his residence in Isaccea between 1296 and 1301), and later on coins of the Genoese colony established there. During the first decades of the 14th century, the name *Sakdji* was mentioned in the history of Baybars al-Mansuri (*Zubdat al-fikra*) and in Abulfida's *Geography* of 1325.[148] In the 18th century, Romanians employed the name *Sacce*,[149] its present form *Isaccea* having developed as the result of a confusion with the personal name *Isac*. It therefore seems likely that the city took a name of Turkic origin under the Mongols. In other words, whatever the origin and meaning of the name *Saqčy* from which *Sacce/Isaccea* derives, there is absolutely no reason to believe that it derived from the name of an obscure chief mentioned only by Anna Comnena. Another *Vitzina*, "a river which flows down from the neighboring hills," is mentioned in Anna Comnena's *Alexiad* somewhere north of the pass of Sidera (Riš), and south of Pliska. That river has been identified with Kamčija, also called Tiča, which appears in Constantine Porphyrogenitus as *Ditzina* (the Bulgarian form was most likely Dičina). The same name (*Disina* or *Desina*) was later given by al-Idrisi to a city at a distance of four days to the east from Barisklafa (Little Preslav).[150] This is most likely *Venzina*, placed between Kamčija and Varna, a city destroyed by the Ottoman Turks in 1388, as mentioned in the chronicle of Mehmed Nešri.[151] In Anna Comnena's account, Vitzina appears as almost of the same importance as Dristra, and, moreover, the residence of a rebel. As a consequence, some have proposed this to be the

[146] *Russian Primary Chronicle*, 213. For the fights with the Polovtsy (Cumans) see Franklin, Shepard 1996, 266, 272.

[147] Brătescu 1920, 31; Brătianu 1935, 24–26; Cihodaru 1978–1979, 295; Brezeanu 2002, 38 (who considered that *Satza* reflects a Greek form of a Romanian placename *Saca*); Ciocîltan 2011, 415.

[148] Brătianu 1935, 39, 45, 70; Baraschi 1981, 336; Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1995–1996, 200–211; Vásáry 2005, 90, 91, 97; Spinei 2009, 32.

[149] Giurescu 1971, 258.

[150] Constantine Porphyrogenitus, IX, 101 (ed. Moravcsik, 62/63); Anna Comnena, VII, 3.1 (transl. Sewter, 222); Al-Idrisi (ed. Jaubert, 386, 397; ed. Miller, 123, 129, 132); Tomaschek 1886, 311–312; Brătescu 1920, 9, 30; Brătianu 1935, 12–18; Brătianu 1942, 146–147; Gyóni 1952, 505–512; Beševliev 1962, 69; Cihodaru 1978–1979, 283; Beševliev 1985, 21–22.

[151] Brătianu 1935, 83–84; Cihodaru 1978–1979, 284–285.

first mention of the famous and enigmatic city of Vicina or Vecina, known to have been in existence and to have prospered during the 13th and 14th centuries on an island somewhere on the Danube. This Vicina has nothing to do with the place mentioned by al-Idrisi near the Kamčija river, but could indeed be the same as that mentioned by Anna Comnena.[152]

The location of Vicina was and remains one of the most vexed questions of the Romanian historiography. This is not the place for an extensive presentation of the problem, but some considerations are necessary to clarify what could be said about the 11th-century Vitzina, which appears in Anna Comnena's *Alexiad*. In the late 13th century, the city of Vicina was already so important to become the residence of a metropolitan bishop, first mentioned in 1285 (*Vitzina* in the Greek spelling). Already in 1296, the portolan chart entitled *Il compasso da navigare* calls the Danube *flume de Vicina*. The city was recovered by the Byzantines shortly after 1261, and become a Genoese colony, but fell under Mongol rule around 1338. The subsequent decline coincided in time with the rise of Chilia and Brăila as rival trading centers.[153] It is quite possible, although not certain, that the fortress mentioned by Anna Comnena is the same as the famous medieval city. In that case, it remains to be explained why Vicina was not mentioned in any of the rather abundant sources between the 1080s and 1281 (the year of its first mentioned in the notarial documents of the Genoese colony in Pera). The only exception may be an epigram celebrating the exploits of the general John Dukas in the war of 1167 against Hungary (see below). The text preserved in the manuscript *Marcianus Graecus* 524 mentions that Dukas crossed the Danube at Vidin, which is in contradiction with the account of the same expedition in John Kinnamos, according to whom the army commanded by John Dukas entered Hungary via Moldavia. Some have therefore proposed that the author of the epigram mistook Vidin for Vicin, that is Vicina.[154] However, it is equally possible that Kinnamos was wrong.[155]

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[152] Still, some historians considered that Desina from the work of Al-Idrisi and Vicina from Dobrudja were the same place (Bromberg 1937, 177; Stănescu 1970, 124; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 164; Kuzev 1981, 272; Cihodaru 1978–1979, 284–289; Todorova 1984, 431; Atanasov 1994, 112–113; Malamut 1995, 135).

[153] For the history of Vicina see, for instance: Brătianu 1935, 9–96; Brătianu 1942, 144–154; Cihodaru 1978–1979, 295–302; Todorova 1984, 429–441; Năsturel 1987, 145–171; Iliescu 1994, 229–236.

[154] Diaconu 1978, 103; Baraschi 1981, 317; Cândea 1999, 154 (identified with Măcin).

[155] Năsturel 1969, 180–181.

The name *Vicina* or *Vecina* derives from the Romanian or the Italian (in any case, Romance) word for "neighbor," which suggests that the city developed in close proximity of an older one. If the fort mentioned by Anna Comnena was really the same as the city first mentioned in 1281, then the name must have been of Romanian, and not Italian origin. The 14th-century sources about Vicina are so vague that its location was much disputed. Leaving aside such impossible identifications as Măcin (because of a supposed name similarity, but without any support in the archaeological evidence),[156] or Nufăru[157] (which was in fact Presthlavitza), two major theories may be distinguished. According to one of them, Vicina was on an island near Isaccea or Isaccea itself (some have even maintained that that city had two names).[158] Aerial photography revealed a site of urban character (the street grid is still visible) about 1 km south from the ancient Noviodunum in Isaccea, which may be for Vicina.[159] Hydrological studies also revealed the existence of an old, now sunken island farther to the west, next to the mouth of the Prut river.[160] A different theory has been put forward by Petre Diaconu, who identified Vicina with Păcuiul lui Soare.[161] A key argument in this theory is the distance between Vicina and the mouths of the Danube, which is given in the portolan chart of 1296 as 200 Genoese miles. That roughly corresponds to the distance between Păcuiul lui Soare and the Danube Delta, but there are other problems with this theory. As Petre Năsturel has noted, a notarial act issued in Chilia on October 18, 1360 mentions a ship departing from Chilia to Vicina and then back to the Black Sea, which implies that those three points of destination were not too far from each other, given that sailing upstream in the winter was very difficult, if not impossible. This further means that Vicina must have been somewhere on the maritime segment of the Danube, i.e., between the Danube Delta and the present-day city of Galaţi. The main commodity exported in Vicina was wheat, which required land transportation, too difficult through the Bărăgan steppe in eastern Wallachia, but much easier along the valleys of the Moldavian rivers Siret and Prut. Moreover, establishing a new metropolitan bishopric in close proximity to

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156 Tomaschek 1886, 30; Brătescu 1920, 30; Bromberg 1938, 19–29; Gyóni 1943–1944, 20; Ciocîltan 2011.

157 Atanasov 1994, 114–128.

158 Grămadă 1924, 458; Giurescu 1971, 258; Vásáry 2005, 161.

159 Rada et alii 1988, 203–204.

160 Botzan 1992, 61–73. A similar point of view was sustained by Cihodaru 1978–1979, 294–295 (between Isaccea and Somova).

161 See especially Diaconu 1976 a.

Dristra made no sense whatsoever. When Vicina began to decline, its position was quickly taken by Brăila, the terminal of the trade route connecting Transylvania to the Danube across the Carpathian Mountains during the second half of the 14th century. In conclusion, the best solution is to look for Vicina on a now disappeared island close to Garvăn, or to the south from the old town in Isaccea.

The restoration of imperial authority in Paradunavon was the result of the victories Alexios I Comnenos obtained against the Pechenegs. After the conclusion of the general crisis caused by internal rebellions and the Norman invasion, the emperor turned to the Pecheneg problem and the secession of Paradunavon. The general Gregory Pakourianos (the commander of the western army) won a victory against the Pechenegs in the early months of 1083 at an unknown location (there is a lacuna in Anna Comnena's text at this point),[162] but the Pechenegs mauled another army sent against them, and the generals Gregory Pakourianos and Nicholas Branas were killed in battle in the pass of Veliatova. The rebels were then stopped near Philippopolis (Plovdiv) by another army led by Constantine Humbertopoulos, the commander of an elite troop of Flemish mercenaries.[163] The Pechenegs continued to raid the lands south of Stara Planina Mountains, sometimes in cooperation with other rebels, not just with Nikephorus Basilakios. In 1086, they forged an alliance with Traulos, the chief of the rebel Paulicians in Thrace, while in 1087 they raided together with the former Hungarian king Salomon and the Cumans. The crisis in Paradunavon did not end until 1091 mainly because of the Pechenegs, and it is possible that the natives were more inclined during those years to side with the central power against the Pechenegs. An even greater threat came in the spring of 1087, when under the command of Tzelgu, a large number of Pechenegs crossed the Danube together with a group of Cumans and with the Hungarian followers of the former king Salomon, who had meanwhile been dethroned by Ladislas I (1077–1095). The coalition ravaged the entire region between the Danube and the Stara Planina Mountains, before entering Thrace. After that, they withdrew to southern Dobrudja, Tatós's power center of Tatós.[164] This time,

[162] Frankopan 1996, 278–281; Spinei 2006, 202–203; Meško 2011, 142.

[163] Anna Comnena, VI, 14, 3–4 (transl. Sewter, 213); Diaconu 1970, 116; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 146–147; Birkenmeier 2002, 71; Stephenson 2000, 101; Curta 2006, 290, 300.

[164] Anna Comnena, VII, 1.1 (transl. Sewter, 217–218); SRH, I, 409; Iorga 1937, 40, 86; Necşulescu 1937, 144–145; Stănescu 1966, 60–63; Diaconu 1970, 117; Diaconu 1978, 35–36; Birkenmeier 2002, 71; Stephenson 2000, 102; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 149; Kosztolnyik 2002, 385; Curta 2006, 300; Spinei 2006, 203–204, 367.

the pursuing Byzantine army commanded by Nicholas Mavrokatakalon was successful. Tzelgu and Salomon were killed, and the army of Alexios I counter-attacked in the summer and fall of 1087. The strategy employed in this campaign seems to have been the same joint naval and land operations that Leo VI applied in 895 and John Tzimiskes in 971. The field army advanced through Thrace, reached Pliska and then Dristra. At the same time, the navy commanded by George Euphorbenos was sent to the Danube, in an attempt to repeat the successful operation of 971.[165] It is possible that the message sent by Adrian Comnenos (mentioned in the previous chapter) concerned the operations of the navy, given that Isaccea was a major anchorage.

The itinerary of the army is marked by imperial seals and gold coin hoards found at Golyam Izvor, Melnitsa, Zlati Voyvoda, Preslav, Kirkovo, Drandar, Vodno, Gurgendzhik, Iširkovo, and Păcuiul lui Soare.[166] During the siege of Dristra, three hoards of folles, one of 3,226 specimens, were buried there.[167] In the first phase of the battle, the Byzantine army was able to break through the outer precinct, but the citadel resisted. The siege ultimately failed because Tatós was able to launch a night attack against the imperial camp, which had been set at 24 *stadia* (about 4.5 km) from the city, on the site of an old Roman *vicus*. Alexios I's attempt to reset the siege ended in disaster. In the end, the victory was secured by a Cuman force summoned to Dristra from the lands north of the Danube by Tatós. The Byzantine lines were broken and quickly withdrew.[168] However, when the Cumans and the Pechenegs began to quarrel over the booty, the latter were overwhelmed, and feld to a place called *Ozolimne*. In a note to her main narrative, Anna Comnena explains that "the lake now called by us Ozolimne is in diameter and circumference very big, in surface area not inferior to any other lake described by geographers. It lies beyond the 'Hundred Hills' and into it flow very great and noble rivers; many ships and large transport vessels sail on its waters, from which one can deduce

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[165] Anna Comnena, VII, 2–7 (transl. Sewter, 220–222); Necşulescu 1937, 145; Diaconu 1970, 117; Malamut 1995, 136–137; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 150; Kostova 2006, 590–593; Spinei 2006, 205; Meško 2011, 134–135, 143. He was not the "governor of Paradunavon", as believes Mărculeţ 2005, 94.

[166] Yotov 2008 b, 172–176; Yotov 2008 c, 262; Jordanov 2009, 101–103; Valeriev 2010, 653–657.

[167] Custurea, Talmaţchi 2011, 339, 341–342.

[168] Anna Comnena, VII, 3–4 (transl. Sewter, 223–229); Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 148–149; Diaconu 1970, 117–118; Malamut 1995, 137–138; Birkenmeier 2002, 72–74; Curta 2006, 290, 300–301; Spinei 2006, 205–206; Yotov 2008 c, 257–263.

how deep the lake is. It has been called Ozolimne, not because it emits an evil or unpleasant odor, but because an army of Huns once visited the lake and the vernacular word for Huns is 'Ouzi'. The Huns bivouacked by the banks of this lake and the name Ouzolimne was given it, with the addition of the vowel 'u'. No congregation of Huns in that area has ever been mentioned by the ancient historians, but in Alexius' reign there was a general migration there from all directions—hence the name." Although this description makes it very clear that Ozolimne was navigable, Petre Diaconu tried to demonstrate that this was a swampy area near Preslav, for which he took *Hekaton Bounoi* as a reference point. Most other historians believe that Ozolimne is in fact Balta Ialomiţei, the marshy area in which both Pechenegs and Uzes stayed when arriving at the Danube. Needless to say, the etymology advanced by Anna Comnena is wrong, as there are several other marshes called Ozolimne, a word which means "bad-smelling lake."[169]

After Alexios I's campaign failed, the Pechenegs took the initiative and for four years raided deeply into Thrace, all the way to the walls of Constantinople (1088–1091). The situation became desperate for Emperor Alexios, when the Pechenegs established contacts with Tzachas, the Seljuk emir who had already occupied a part of Asia Minor and had attacked a number of islands in the Aegean Sea. With a fleet built with the assistance of a Greek renegade, Tzachas intended to besiege Constantinople, and his cooperation with the Pechenegs is strikingly similar to the joint Avar-Persian attack on that city in 626. Alexios I succeeded to use the tensions between Cumans and Pechenegs to attract the latter onto his side. With their assistance, he then inflicted a major defeat upon the Pechenegs at Lebounion, in Thrace, on the Maritsa valley (April 29th, 1091). The involvement of the Cumans was a key to success, because their light cavalry encircled the Pechenegs at a crucial moment in the battle.[170] The duke of Paradunavon (either Gregory Mavrokatakalon or Leo Nikerites) set up contacts with the Cumans north of the Danube. In the aftermath of Lebounion, the imperial authority was reestablished over the Danube.

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[169] Anna Comnena, VII, 5 (transl. Sewter, 229); Grămadă 1925–1926, 85–97; Iorga 1937, 69; Conea, Necşulescu 1937, 146; Donat 1958, 159; Diaconu 1970, 121–129; Spinei 2006, 287.

[170] Anna Comnena, VII, 6–11; VIII, 1–6 (transl. Sewter, 230–260); Zonaras, XVIII, 23.1–6 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 740); Matthew of Edessa, II, 90 (ed. Dostourian, 155); Ostrogorsky 1956, 380–381; Ahrweiler 1966, 184–185; Diaconu 1970, 117–120, 130–132; Angold 1984, 110–111; Malamut 1995, 135–142; Treadgold 1997, 617; Birkenmeier 2002, 70–77; Curta 2006, 301; Spinei 2006, 208–209, 367–368; Spinei 2009, 120.

The Byzantine army at Lebounion also included a *tagma* of 5,000 mountain people whom Anna Comnena calls *Areimanioi*.[171] Some have proposed that those were Vlachs, who call themselves *Armâni*.[172] But Ἀρειμανής appears in classical texts, such as Strabo, with the meaning of "full of warlike frenzy" (possessed by the god Ares), as correctly translated in the English edition of the *Alexiad*.[173] Anna was very fond of such classical references, by which she wanted to show her sophistication. This, however, does not exclude the possibility of those warriors being Vlachs, as they are said to have come from the mountains. It is known that on the eve of Lebounion, the emperor recruited heavily from among Bulgarians and Vlachs in southern Thrace, an area under the command of Nikephoros Melissenos[174] A seal was found in Isaccea of one George, "*strategos* of the Vlachs."[175] Ion Barnea believed this man to be the same as George Dekanos who, being under suspicion of conspiracy, was sent in 1091 to Leo Nikerites, the duke of Paradunavon, "apparently to assist him in protecting the Danube area, but in fact he was sent so that Nikerites might keep an eye on him."[176] Be as it may, the first mention of a "*strategos* of the Vlachs" proves that a military unit—a *tagma*—existed, which was made up of Vlachs. In the late 11th century, the title of *strategos* was bestowed mostly on commanders of cities, but could also be used in a more general sense as "military commander, general." Military units made up of Pechenegs settled within the empire or Norman mercenaries became particularly important during the 11th century.[177] This Vlach unit could have been recruited from the Stara Planina Mountains, which had a concentration of Romanian population, the same area in which the Vlach brothers Peter and Asan would start their rebellion in the late twelfth century.

It is worth mentioning that Alexius I's war with the Pechenegs has nothing to do with the story inserted in the 13th-century "Chronicle of Laon" published by Krijnie Ciggaar. According to that source, a group of English knights in the Byzantine army was sent to the northern coast of the Black Sea to fight against the heathens, most likely in 1083. This means

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171 Anna Comnena, VIII, 5.1 (transl. Sewter, 257).
172 Iorga 1937, 88; Birkenmeier 2002, 76.
173 Gyóni 1951, 251–252.
174 Anna Comnena, VIII, 3.4 (transl. Sewter, 251); Gyóni 1951, 241–243, 249–251; Vásáry 2005, 20.
175 Barnea 2001, 103–104.
176 Anna Comnena, VIII, 9.6–7 (transl. Sewter, 268). A seal of George Dekanos was found in Sozopol (Jordanov 2006, 122–123, nr. 161).
177 Ahrweiler 1960, 33–35, 90; Treadgold 1995, 116–117.

that they were already in Constantinople during the Pecheneg siege of 1075. The text mistakenly took Emperor Michael VII for the better-known Alexios I.[178] The knights are said to have liberated the region, which now became a "New England," and to have built several forts there. An Icelandic saga based on English sources even gives the (English) of those forts. Even though, as early as 1974, Jonathan Shepard has demonstrated on the basis fo place names of English origin preserved on later maps that this episode concerns an area to the east from the Crimea,[179] Răzvan Theodorescu still advanced the idea that the region in question, which is called *Domapia* in the chronicle, was in fact Dobrudja or north-eastern Bulgaria, an idea later shared by Krijnie Ciggaar.[180] The details about the length of the barbarian rule in *Domapia* do not really fit with the known history of Paradunavon, in which the Pecheneg effectively ruled only between 1072 and 1091. Moreover, not all Pechenegs were pagan throughout that period. Judging from the chronicle's account, contact between Constantinople and *Domapia* was possible only by sea. Finally, it is possible to derive the name *Domapia* from the name of the river *Don*. Thus, the area settled by the Englishmen was Zichia on the north-eastern coast of the Black Sea, where 14th- to 16th-century portolan charts placed cities with such names as *Londina* and *Susaco* (from *Saxon*). A speech of Manuel Straboromanos commemorates in a few words the restoration of the Byzantine rule over the Cimmerian Bosporus under Emperor Alexios I Comnenos, and a lead seal of an *archon* of Zichia has been dated to the same period.[181] The English knights requested priests of the Latin rite from Hungary. This was seen as a proof that Domapia was next to Hungary, but in reality that country was the closest Catholic state to Crimea, and not just to the Danube area. Based on the supposed location of *Domapia* near the Danube, Ferenc Makk even developed the theory of a crusader state established by English knights, but then used by the Hungarian king Ladislas I (1077–1095) as a launchpad for his expansionist policy into the Balkans.[182] It was the same Jonathan Shepard who noted that no evidence exists for such a policy.[183] In conclusion, the so-called "New England" has nothing to do with the history of Paradunavon.[184]

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178 Ciggaar 1974, 301–342.
179 Shepard 1974, 18–39.
180 Theodorescu 1981, 637–646.
181 Bănescu 1941, 59, 73–74; Shepard 1974, 22–23, 25, 28.
182 Makk 1994 a, 59–67; Makk 1999, 79–84.
183 Shepard 1999, 68.
184 For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Madgearu 2003 b, 137–144.

Shortly after the restoration of the Byzantine authority over Paradunavon, the emperor was confronted with another problem on the Danube frontier, namely the Cuman attack of 1095. A Cuman chieftain named Tugorkan or Togortak offered his support to an impostor pretending to be Nikephoros Diogenes, Emperor Romanos IV's son, for whom he was now trying to obtain the power in Constantinople. An army was sent to Isaccea in order to stop the Cumans, who had occupied Paristrion.[185] Proof for that is the seal of Katakalon Tarchaneiotes, who is known to have participated in this campaign against the Cumans.[186] The troops were paid with coins struck in the Isaccea mint, which had produced silver specimens on behalf of Emperor Alexios I through the monetary reform of 1092. The mint then continued to operate throughout Alexios' entire reign.[187]

Scholars used to believe that northern Dobrudja was spared by the Cuman invasion, as Tugorkan may have crossed the Danube at Dervent. To be sure, the fort at Păcuiul lui Soare, which is the closest to the Dervent ford, was destroyed and abandoned throughout the 12th century.[188] The attack then moved to the south, as indicated by the large hoard from Kalipetrovo.[189] New studies have however shown that Isaccea was also destroyed in the late 11th century, while Păcuiul lui Soare may have been attacked, but was certainly not destroyed in 1095. Instead, its annihilation came only with the last Pecheneg invasion into the Empire, that of 1122 (see below). It is therefore likely that the Cumans of 1095 crossed the Danube at Isaccea. The settlement outside the walls was abandoned on that occasion, and became a cemetery in the 12th–13th centuries.[190] Another Cuman group may have crossed the Danube at Axiopolis, given that that fort is supposed to have been destroyed in 1095. The supposition is based on a text mentioning the transfer of the bishop of Axiopolis, who had remained without see. The general context of those events fits with the year 1095, and consequently with the Cuman attack.[191]

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[185] Anna Comnena, X, 2 (transl. Sewter, 297–302); Zonaras, XVIII, 23.26 (ed. Büttner-Wobst, 744); *Russian Primary Chronicle*, 180; Diaconu 1978, 41–51; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 c, 110–111 (who established the right date of the attack, 1095, not 1094); Spinei 2006, 374–375; Spinei 2009, 121–122. About this pretender, see Frankopan 2005, 147–165.

[186] Barnea 1997, 358. Three other seals of Katakalon Tarchaneiotes have been found in Dristra and in two unknown places in north-eastern Bulgaria (Jordanov 2006, 398–399, nr. 701–703).

[187] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 163–173.

[188] Diaconu 1978, 41–55; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1995, 355–359.

[189] Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1992, 42–43; Custurea, Talmaţchi 2011, 246–247.

[190] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 c, 111–115.

[191] Popescu 1994, 421–438.

The Cumans that reached the lands south of the Stara Planina Mountains were beaten by a Byzantine army from Anchialos. In that fort, a leader of the Vlachs came to the emperor, named *Pudilos* (which may render the Romanian name *Budilă* or *Bădilă*). Pudilos brought news about another group of Cumans who had meanwhile crossed the Danube.[192] This implies that some Vlachs were used by the Byzantines at the time to watch over the mountain passes or as scouts.[193] Romanians are known to have acted as spies for the Byzantine army on other occasions as well, for example in the war of 971 against Svyatoslav and against the Pechenegs in 1049. Pudilos/Bădilă was a local ruler from the Danube lands,[194] but he may have also had an office in the Byzantine army. Other Vlachs from the Stara Planina Mountains were meanwhile hostile to the Byzantines, and told the Cumans about routes to bypass the defended mountain passes.[195] It is interesting to note in this respect what a military manual composed by Emperor Basil II himself has to say about such situations: "The men we call guides are not simply men who know the roads, for the lowliest peasant can do that, but men who, in addition to knowing the roads, are able to conduct the army through the mountain passes."[196] It is, however, a gross exaggeration to treat the Romanians and the Cumans of 1095 as an anti-Byzantine coalition, perhaps a rehearsal for the events of 1185–1186.[197] In the late eleventh century In 1095, the Vlachs had no reason to rise in rebellion against the state, and some of them were even recruited for the Byzantine army, while other were opportunists who preferred to take advantage of the Cuman attack.

That the Cumans were capable to bypass the defended mountain passes had major consequences for the future strategy of the Byzantine army. This seems to have shifted the emphasis from defending the line of the river Danube to defending the points of access across the Stara Planina Mountains. The attack of 1095 has demonstrated the key role mountain passes had in the defense of all routes leading to Constantinople, by far great than the fords across the Danube. For that reason, it was necessary to obtain and to maintain the loyalty of the mountain population. The

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192 Anna Comnena, X, 2.6 (transl. Sewter, 298); Giurescu 1931, 118; Brătianu 1935, 26; Iorga 1937, 91; Brătescu 1920, 13; Gyóni 1952, 502–503; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 155; Vásáry 2005, 21; Spinei 2006, 375–376.

193 Stănescu 1989, 28. Spinei 2006, 375.

194 Diaconu 1977 a, 1898; Diaconu 1978, 57.

195 Anna Comnena, X, 3.8 (transl. Sewter, 299); Gyóni 1952, 496–501.

196 *Anonymous Book on Tactics*, 290/291; Dagron, Mihăescu 1986, 251.

197 Vásáry 2005, 21.

Byzantine army already had the experience of recruiting from the mountain population of Albanians in Epirus, who then joined the rebellion of Nikephoros Basilakios in 1078. However, during Bohemond of Taranto's invasion of 1108, the Albanians from the mountains blocked the narrow passes along *Via Egnatia* with palisades and timber barriers.[198] The use of highlanders for military operations involving the defense of mountain passes increased the military role of the Romanians in the Stara Planina Mountains during the 12th century. When the administration tried to extract revenue from those free men, loyalty made room for hostility, and the same mountains turned into bases of operations for rebels. The Bulgarian and the Vlach forces gathered by the Vlach brothers Peter and Asan made great use of their advantages in the mountains when confronting Byzantine armies sent against them, and were thus capable of obtaining remarkable victories, such as that following the ambush of Trjavna in the spring of 1190.[199]

3. *The Danube Frontier in the 12th Century*

A peaceful period followed the Cuman invasion of 1095. The following raid in 1114, reached only the western part of Paradunavon and the theme of Bulgaria. The Cumans crossed the Danube at Vidin, most probably through the ford known to this day as *Vadul Cumanilor* ("the Ford of the Cumans"). Emperor Alexios I led the expedition against them in person, which crossed over onto the northern bank, within Little Walachia (Oltenia), a region with a cluster of place names of Turkic (Pecheneg or Cuman) origin.[200] A much greater impact on Paradunavon had the Pecheneg attack of 1122, the consequences of which may be comparable to those of 1033–1036. After their defeat in 1121 at the hands of Grand Prince of Kiev, Vladimir II Monomakh (1113–1125), the Pechenegs from the steppe lands north of the Black Sea moved to the Danube area. This population movement was not unlike that of the Uzes of 1065. According to John Kinnamos, the Pechenegs came to the Byzantine lands with their families. Michael the Syrian and a anonymous source commemorating the victory

[198] Ducellier 1968, 357–358, 364–368.

[199] Niketas Choniates, *Isaac Angelos*, III. 3 (ed. Van Dieten, 429–430; transl. Magoulias, 236); Akropolites, 133; Tsankova-Petkova 1981, 182.

[200] Anna Comnena, XIV, 9.1 (transl. Sewter, 467); Iorga 1937, 69; Conea, Donat 1958, 154; Diaconu 1978, 59–61; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 c, 114; Mărculeţ 2005, 101; Curta 2006, 312; Spinei 2006, 386–388; Spinei 2009, 124.

later obtained against them insist that there also Cumans among them. The large number of enemies seems to have prompted the emperor to adopt a cautious attitude and to try to bribe some members out of the coalition. He then focused on those nomads who had crossed the Danube and have reached Thrace, where the Byzantine army won a major victory at Beroe in April 1122.[201]

The 1122 invasion of the Pechenegs and the Cumans is responsible for the destruction of the forts in Păcuiul lui Soare, Turcoaia, Garvăn, and Nufăru. Isaccea suffered as well (see Fig. 13). Coin series on all those sites show gaps between the later part of Alexius I's reign and the early regnal years of John II Comnenos.[202] At Garvăn, the attack ended the phase, which archaeologists call "of above-ground dwellings," and the site remained unoccupied until the late 12th century, when the new phase begins, which is called "of the burned dwellings."[203] The seal of Michael "archbishop of Russia" found in Garvăn in the filling of sunken-floored building 168—which belongs to the phase "of the burned dwellings"—was attributed to a metropolitan bishop of Kiev whose term began in 1130 and ended in 1145.[204] Petre Diaconu has however argued that he was in fact a bishop of Iur'ev, who between 1072 and 1073 was then the deputy of the metropolitan bishop.[205] The position in which the seal was discovered suggests that it actually came from the layer into which the building was dug. Moreover, the absence from this site of reliquary crosses of Kievan type, which appear Dobrudja in the second half of the 12th century is a strong argument in favor of the idea that the site was abandoned during that period.[206] The fort in Nufăru was partially restored under the early regnal years of Manuel I Comnenos. After the invasion of 1122, the occupied area shrank behind a new rampart (Z 2, identified at a point known as

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[201] Kinnamos, I. 3 (transl. Brand, 16); Niketas Choniates, *John II Comnenos*, 4 (ed. Van Dieten, 13–15; transl. Magoulias, 10–11); Michael the Syrian, XV.12 (ed. Chabot, 206); Chalandon 1912, 48–50; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 156; Diaconu 1978, 62–71; Angold 1984, 153; Birkenmeier 2002, 90; Spinei 2006, 216–217; Meško 2007, 3–26; Spinei 2009, 125–126; Ivanov, Lubotsky 2010, 595–603.

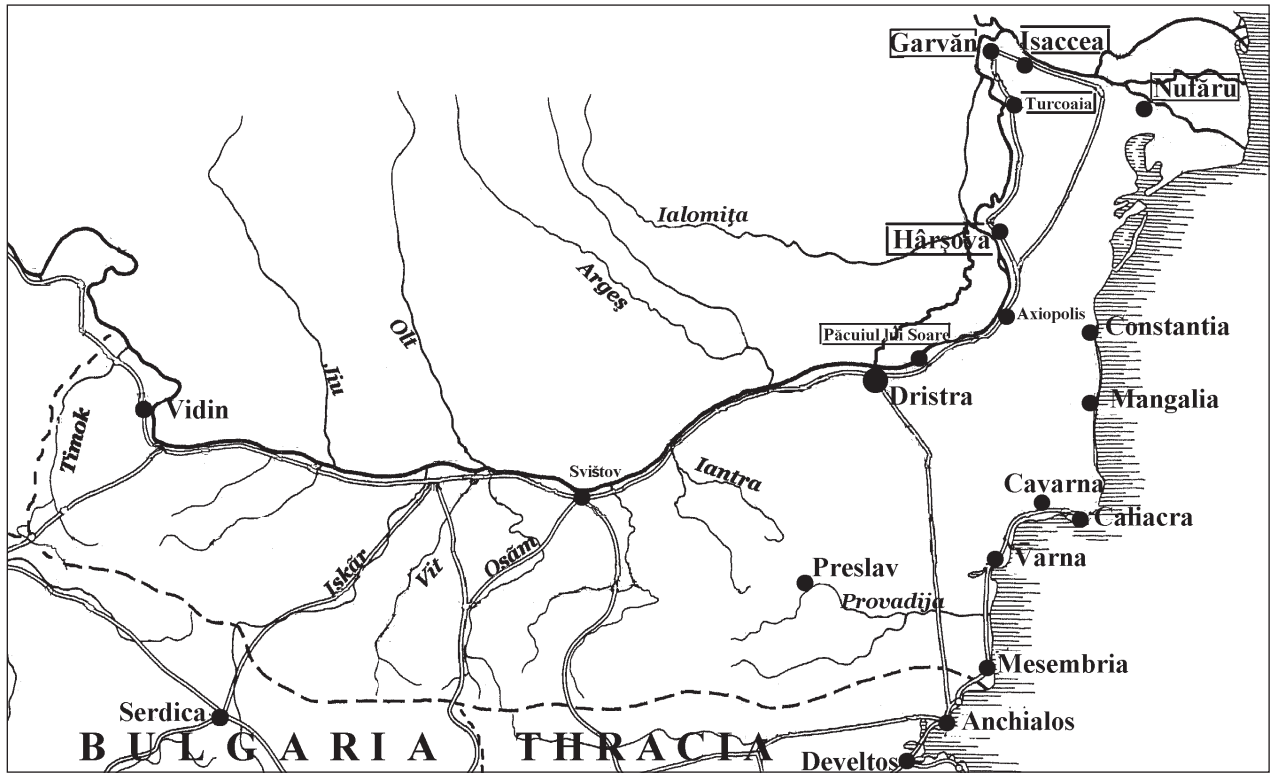
[202] Diaconu 1978, 62–71; Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1998, 81; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 159, 192–194; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 c, 113–114; Curta 200, 312, 314; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2010 a, 194; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2010 d, 446.

[203] Diaconu 1975, 387–394; Diaconu 1978, 62–65, 71, 120–129; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 193.

[204] Ştefan, Barnea 1967, 335–336; Barnea 1980, 282–283.

[205] Diaconu 1992 a, 183–185.

[206] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1987, 289.



13. The fortifications affected by the attack of 1122

"Dispensar"), while the area outside it became a cemetery.[207] Very few coins have been found which could be dated after 1122, in sharp contrast to the situation under Alexios I.[208] The site continued to be occupied, but this decline in the number of coin finds suggests rapid economic decline, as well as the absence of a garrison. This further suggests that in the aftermath of the 1122 attack, the most important settlement in the maritime segment of the Danube was Isaccea. The fort in Nufăru was severely damaged and ceased to be part of the defense system, while Garvăn was entirely abandoned. Judging from the existing evidence, Isaccea remained the only outpost in a land of deserted or impoverished settlements.[209] The large number of 12th-century coins found in Isaccea[210] reflects the prosperity of that city, especially during the reign of Manuel Comnenos, while the existence of an episcopal see may be surmised on the basis of the equally large number of *engolpia* (pectoral crosses).[211] Dristra remained the main city in Paradunavon. Its description by al-Idrisi ("a city with large streets, many bazaars and rich resources") is one of a prosperous urban center. The city was also the residence of a metropolitan bishop, Leo Charsianites, who was in office between 1145 and 1170.[212]

The changing balance of power in the northwestern Balkans led to frequent and intense confrontations between the Byzantine Empire and Hungary in the Middle Danube region. After the disappearance of the theme of Sirmium in 1071, the territory under Byzantine in that region, which was annexed to the theme of Bulgaria, was much diminished. Its westernmost point was the city of Belgrade, still in Byzantine hands in 1096. Its strategic importance was linked to its position at the confluence of the Tisza and Danube rivers. The control over this city by any power located in the south could effectively open up the way to Central Europe along the two rivers. Much later, this is exactly what happened after the Ottoman conquest of Belgrade (1521). For the Byzantines, however, Belgrade was simply a launchpad for campaigns against Hungary led by Emperors John II and Manuel.

In those campaigns, the Byzantine army attacked along the roads crossing the center of the Balkan Peninsula and reaching Vidin, Braničevo, and

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[207] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1998, 80; Damian, Andonie, Vasile 2001, 165; Damian, Andonie, Vasile 2002, 217.
[208] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 413 (table 15).
[209] The same conclusion at Curta 2006, 319–320.
[210] Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1992, 44–51, 58–59.
[211] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 1987, 285–292.
[212] Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 163; Shepard 1979, 233.

Belgrade in the north. The navy was also used in those operations, which were made possible by the existence of several anchorages, such as those of Isaccea, Axiopolis (at least until 1148), and Dristra.

That the region between Braničevo and Belgrade is called "Paristrian" in the main accounts of those campaigns, which may be found in John Kinnamos and Niketas Choniates,[213] shows that the name previously employed metaphorically for the lower course of the Danube was now extended to its middle course. Such a change may reflect a shift in strategic interests, but not the creation of a province named *Paristrion*. The name *Paristria* appears in the letter of Emperor Isaac II Angelos (1185–1195) to Pope Celestin III (1191–1198), which was drafted by the *logothetes* Demetrios Tornikes in 1193,[214] and clearly refers to the Middle Danube region in the context of the Hungarian attack on Serbia in the winter of 1192/1193. The emperor complains about Christians attacking Christians: "This passion which overcame almost all those who are called Christians started in Germany and Sicily and extended even to the Ocean (...) and now this passion, after crossing the Ocean and the Rhine, flows into Paristria." He then describes the situation in Serbia. While this is solid evidence that the name "Paristrion" was now applied to the region between Belgrade and Braničevo, there is no mention of a province by that name anywhere in the northwestern Balkans.

The expansion of the Hungarian kingdom to the southwest must be seen in the context of the occupation of Croatia in 1091. The Byzantine reaction to those events was a campaign aiming at restricting the Hungarian push to Dalmatia, which was still in Byzantine hands.[215] Knowing that a Pecheneg raid devastated Hungary in that same year, it is not impossible that in the aftermath of Lebounion, the Byzantines may have used the Pechenegs to create a diversion. With imperial authority over Paradunavon restored, contact with the Pechenegs north of the Danube was made possible through such centers as Isaccea. It is likewise possible that the invaders came from Paradunavon. With the power of Hungary on the rise, Alexios I tried to prevent a coalition between Hungary and his arch-enemy, Bohemond of Taranto, who was at the time contemplating a matrimonial alliance with the Hungarian king Coloman. In 1105, Alexios' son John married Princess Piroska (Irene), the daughter of the

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213 Kinnamos, III, 11 (transl. Brand, 94); Niketas Choniates, *Manuel Comnenos*, IV, 1 (ed. Van Dieten, 127; transl. Magoulias, 72).

214 Demetrios Tornikes, 342/343; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 206.

215 Urbansky 1968, 28–29; Makk 1989, 10; Makk 1990, 18; Fine 1991, 284; Makk 1994 a, 65.

former king Ladislas I. The emperor also allowed Hungary to take Dalmatia, a province which was almost independent, and in which Hungary had already occupied important cities, such as Zara and Spalato.[216] He then enjoined Venice to the alliance against Bohemond's invasion of Epirus in 1107. In 1115, Venice attacked the Hungarian domain in Dalmatia, in retaliation for what was perceived as interference in the Venitian economic hinterland.[217]

As for the peaceful Byzantine-Hungarian relations, they were abruptly interrupted in 1127, when one of the claimants to the Hungarian crown, Prince Almos, sought refuge and assistance in the empire, as Emperor John II Comnenos (1118–1143) had married his (Almos's) cousin Piroska, now renamed Irene. In retaliation, the Hungarian king Stephen II (1116–1131) took Braničevo and then advanced in the direction of Niš, Sofia, and Philippopolis. John II Comnenos's counter-attack in the spring of 1128 recovered all losses, including Braničevo, and also conquered the region between the Sava and the Danube, which was abandoned in 1071 (*Frankochorion*). The navy equipped with "Greek Fire" assisted the land troops, which marched through Sofia to Braničevo and Belgrade. The ships were then used for the crossing onto the left bank of the Danube at Zemun, the fort in front of Belgrade. Haram (Nova Palanka), at the mouth of river Nera, in front of Braničevo, was the other bridgehead taken on this occasion. That the Byzantine navy was capable of moving beyond the Iron Gates indicates the existence of some anchorages along the Danube. The involvement of the navy in such a remote segment of the Danube was a novelty for the Byzantine military history, which must have involved a serious logistic effort. All previous operations had concerned only the segment between the Danube Delta and Dristra. This naval campaign was in fact decisive for the victory, the most important achievement of which was the reconquest of Braničevo. The king of Hungary resumed the war in 1129 with the assistance of his Czech vassals, and retook Braničevo. During this campaign, Hungary was also assisted by the great zhupan Uroš I (circa 1125–circa 1145), the ruler of the Serbs in Raška, who had risen in rebellion against the Byzantines. His daughter Helen later married in 1130 the future Hungarian king Béla II (1131–1141). The Serbian defection posed a serious threat to the security of the road linking Belgrade to Niš and

[216] Urbansky 1968, 32–34, 37–38; Makk 1989, 14; Fine 1991, 234, 285; Stephenson 2000, 180–181, 197–199; Rostkowski 2001, 162–163.

[217] Chalandon 1912, 55–56; Makk 1989, 15; Stephenson 2000, 203; Rostkowski 2001, 163.

Sofia. Another Hungarian attack in 1129 caused a reaction from John II, who crushed the Serbian rebels and retook Braničevo, forcing Hungary to recognize the city as Byzantine domain through the peace treaty concluded in October 1129.[218] The war of 1127–1129 had a defensive character for the Byzantine Empire, because the target was to preserve the control over the strategic position of Braničevo. The initiative belonged to Hungary, and John II had no intention to occupy the region of Sirmium. He preferred to concentrate forces in the East, a much more important theater of war.[219]

Manuel I Comnenos' strategic goal during his long reign (1143–1180) was to restore the western frontiers to their line established by Basil II. The confrontation with Hungary was only a part of this ambitious plan, the inadequacy of which was shown by the final failure in the wars against the German Empire and the Seljuk Turks.[220] Unlike John II, Manuel waged an offensive war against Hungary, for his intention seems to have been to transform Hungary into a buffer state between the Byzantine and German empires, at a time when, after 1156, the deterioration of his relations with Frederick I Barbarossa (1152–1190) had led to what Paul Magdalino has called "cold war.[221] Manuel led 13 campaigns between 1149 and 1167, the result of which was to put an end to the Hungarian expansion in the direction of the Adriatic Sea and of Serbia.

A new Cuman raid affected Dobrudja in 1148, before hostilities started with Hungary. At that time, the Byzantine army was involved in the war against Roger II of Sicily (1130–1154), who in 1147, taking advantage of the Second Crusade, had Corfu and a number of forts in Peloponnesus. Manuel appealed to Venice. He also intended to send an expedition to recover Corfu and to reestablish the Byzantine rule over southern Italy.[222] The campaign was put on hold, however, when news arrived about Cumans having ravaged the entire region between the Danube and the

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[218] Kinnamos, I, 4 (transl. Brand, 17–19); Niketas Choniates, *John II Comnenos*, 5 (ed. Van Dieten, 17–18; transl. Magoulias, 11–12); SRH, I, 439–443; Chalandon 1912, 58–61; Urbansky 1968, 45–46; Angold 1984, 154, 174; Kosztolnyik 1987, 88–90; Makk 1989, 24–27; Fine 1991, 234–235; Stephenson 2000, 207–209; Rostkowski 2001, 166–169; Birkenmeier 2002, 90–91; Curta 2006, 328–329; Kostova 2008 b, 270.

[219] Makk 1999, 109–110; Stephenson 2000, 206–210.

[220] Ostrogorsky 1956, 402–414; Angold 1984, 161–184; Treadgold 1997, 638–650; Stephenson 2000, 211–274.

[221] Magdalino 1993, 62; Stephenson 2000, 239–274. See also Ferluga 1976, 193–213; Fine 1991, 236–242.

[222] Chalandon 1912, 318–323; Urbansky 1968, 62–63; Makk 1989, 43–45; Magdalino 1993, 46–53; Stephenson 2000, 223.

Stara Planina Mountains. The emperor decided to go in person against those enemies. At the head of the land army, he reached the Danube at an unknown location. While waiting for the arrival of the navy sent from Constantinople, he decided to raid the territories on the northern side of the river, which he crossed on fishing boats collected from the neighborhood. A man who did not know who he was, complained to him about the emperor's lack of concern for the population in the Danube region. Manuel crossed the Danube with 500 soldiers and made a surprise attack on a Cuman campsite.[223] To judge from Kinnamos' account, this action was meant to serve as propaganda means for distracting attention from the lack of any defense of the Lower Danube, in sharp contrast to the situation on the border with Hungary. The Cumans were regarded as less dangerous than the Arpadian kingdom, and because of that there is very little information about what was going on in Dobrudja during the 12th century. This one-sided strategy in fact encourage the rise of the Cuman power in the second half of the 12th century, when the Cumans became a regional power, a "steppe empire", which will dominate the area until the Mongol invasions. The Cuman invasion of 1148 was followed by other attacks perfectly timed to coincide with the Byzantine involvement in the war with Hungary, which raises the possibility of a Hungarian-Cuman cooperation. For instance, in 1154, the Cumans plundered the Byzantine cities along the Danube. A commander called Kalamanos (who, in fact, was Boris, the illegitimate son of the Hungarian king Coloman) was sent with some troops against the Cumans, but he was easily defeated because, in Niketas Choniates's words, "he conducted the campaign ineptly." Choniates' account suggests that there were no permanent forces garrisoned in the forts along the Danube. A third Cuman raid is mentioned by Kinnamos for 1161.[224]

The study of coin hoards buried during the 1148 attack reveals that northern Dobrudja was the most affected area.[225] The identification of the place where Manuel crossed the Danube has long been a matter of dispute. The fisherman who complained to the emperor, without knowing

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[223] Kinnamos, III, 3 (transl. Brand, 76–77); Niketas Choniates, *Manuel Comnenos*, II, 2 (ed. Van Dieten, 78; transl. Magoulias, 46); Urbansky 1968, 63; Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 157–160; Diaconu 1978, 78–80; Spinei 2006, 388.

[224] Kinnamos, IV, 24 (transl. Brand, 153); Niketas Choniates, *Manuel Comnenos*, II. 7 (ed. Van Dieten, 93; transl. Magoulias, 54); Chalandon 1912, 323–325; Urbansky 1968, 81; Diaconu 1978, 89–90; Makk 1989, 148; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 197–198; Spinei 2006, 389; Spinei 2009, 129–130.

[225] Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1992, 44, 56; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 196–199.

who he was, also revealed to him that a fort named Demnitzikos had been destroyed by the Cumans and left deserted. Kinnamos also mentioned a name, *Tenouormon*, which refers to a place in the region north of the Danube which Manuel's men raided. The fort of Demnitzikos was first identified with Dinogetia (Garvăn), where archaeological excavations had revealed a layer of destruction dated to the mid-12th century,[226] but that destruction seems to be linked to the Pecheneg attack of 1122 (see above).[227] Others have proposed Zimnicea, mainly on the basis of name similarity, but no 12th-century is known from that city. Still others advanced the idea that Demnitzikos was Sviştov, and that the name had later been moved north of the Danube.[228] This identification could not make use of a further identification of *Tenouormon* with Teleorman (now a county just north of the Danube), as Petre Ş. Năsturel has demonstrated that the name *Tenouormon* (which means "wild forest") was most likely the Cuman name for the entire forested area in Walachia and southern Moldavia. This area is in effect called "the large forest" in medieval Romanian charters. The progressive shrinking of that area during the late Middle Ages and the early modern period made it possible to restrict its use the present county of Teleorman.[229] In a later study, Petre Ş. Năsturel re-analyzed the passage in Kinnamos and noted that the expression "a city worth of its name" (πόλιν λόγου ἀξίαν) is a slightly veiled allusion to Axiopolis. His conclusion was that Manuel crossed the Danube at Cernavoda, in which case the small fort (*phrourion*) Demnitzikos could only be the fort located at the end of the Stone Dike, now called "Cetatea Pătulului." The two streams which Manuel's soldiers are said to have crossed would then be the main branch and the Borcea branch of the Danube.[230] This seems to be the best interpretation of the passage. Axiopolis remained a Byzantine fort until the attack of 1148, but no archaeological confirmation of this date is so far available. However, it is quite possible that Axiopolis was one of the few forts left, to the existence of which the Cuman attack of 1148 put an end.

Much more important than the location of Demnitzikos is the conclusion one can draw about the general situation of the Lower Danube

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[226] Bolşacov-Ghimpu 1967, 543–549 (accepted by Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 158–160 and Barnea 1971, 355).

[227] Diaconu 1978, 62–71.

[228] Diaconu 1978, 86–88. The identification with Zimnicea was also proposed by Iorga 1937, 70, 205; Bănescu 1927, 20; Bănescu 1946, 104; Kostova 2008 b, 275.

[229] Năsturel 1981, 81–91.

[230] Năsturel 2004, 521–529. Spinei 2009, 129 quotes this study, still endorsing the previous opinion of Năsturel.

region in the mid-12th century, namely that it now took a backseat to the main action taking place in the northwestern Balkans. This disregard for the Lower Danube frontier allowed the Cuman power to rise north of the Danube, especially after the Cumans established an alliance in 1159 with Ivan Rostislavich and got involved in the fratricide strife in Halych. Danube Cumania emerged as a new power between the Byzantine Empire, Hungary and the Rus' principalities. The "steppe empire" created by the Cumans (called *Qipchak*) extended from Bărăgan (the steppe in eastern Wallachia) to the Volga, and was made up of several power centers.[231] Cumania blocked the Rus' expansion toward the Danube, but did not prevent commercial relations between Halych and the Byzantine cities on the Danube. Halychian merchants traveled south along the Dniester and the Prut rivers, and Rus' imports (primarily pectoral crosses and various garments) began to appear in Moldavia and in settlements from Paradunavon, such as Isaccea, Garvăn, Dristra, and Păcuiul lui Soare.[232] To the south, Halych reached as far as north-eastern Moldavia, on the upper course of rivers Prut and Dniester. The theory of a complete incorporation of Moldavia within Halych, which was put forward by the Russian and Soviet historians is based on an erroneous interpretation of the presence of the Rus' traders, and on the story of the so-called Berladniks. Prince Ivan Rostislavich gathered the Cumans in 1159 in order to prey on Rus' traders and their boats on the Danube. As Victor Spinei has demonstrated, the Berladniks who were led by that prince in the fight against Iaroslav Osmomysl have no relation with the Moldavian town Bârlad, a settlement which appeared much later. The city of Berlad mentioned in the Rus' chronicles was in Volyhnia.[233] Cumania, not Halych, was the dominant power in the region north of the Lower Danube in the mid-12th century. The princes of Suzdal' Vasilko (son of Yuri Dolgoruki) and Vladimir, who are said to have settled down in 1165 somewhere on the Danube, were most likely in control of a number of forts within the Byzantine territory. That appanage could hardly be regarded as an extension of the Rus' principality to the Danube.[234]

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[231] Diaconu 1978, 95; Shepard 1979, 207; Pritsak 1982, 367; Perkhavko 1996, 18; Vásáry 2005, 7, 32; Spinei 2006, 393; Spinei 2009, 131.

[232] Popescu 1992, 145–150.

[233] Cihodaru 1979, 179; Boldur 1988, 228–231; Purici 1997, 189–202; Curta 2006, 315–316; Spinei 2009, 135–137.

[234] Kinnamos, V, 12 (transl. Brand, 178); Bănescu 1927, 21; Brătianu 1935, 29; Frances 1959, 57; Diaconu 1977 a, 1897; Diaconu 1978, 98; Tăpkova-Zaimova 1980, 334.

The conflict with Hungary during Manuel I Comnenos's reign was initiated by Hungary. In 1149, Géza II gave his support to another Serbian rebellion in Raška against the Byzantines. The Serbs entered a dynastic alliance with Hungary, as Jelena, the daughter of the great zhupan Uroš I (circa 1125–circa 1145) married Béla II (1131–1141). On the other hand, the great zhupan Uroš II (circa 1145–circa 1160) concluded an anti-Byzantine agreement with Roger II of Sicily. The war in Serbia delayed the Byzantine response to the Hungarian aggression, because Manuel had to use a part of his army to quell the rebellion of the Serbs. By 1150, however, the Byzantine army was ready to march against Hungary, and managed to defeat the Hungarians before they joined the Serbian rebels. The Hungarians had attacked, as usual, along the valley of the river Morava in the direction of Niš. After the decisive battle of Tara (north of Niš) in September 1150, the great zhupan was forced to abandon his alliance with Géza II and Roger II. The pacification of the Serbian lands was a sine qua non of the campaign against Hungary. In 1166, Manuel put all of Raška under the rule of his faithful ally, the great zhupan Tihomir.[235]

It was easier for the Byzantines to deal with Hungary and Raška than with the Normans in Sicily.[236] Manuel therefore adopted an offensive strategy in the Middle Danube region. In October or November 1150, at the time the largest part of the army of the Hungarian king Géza II was on campaign in Halych, the Byzantine navy was again sent from Constantinople to the Danube, at the same time as the land troops marched to Belgrade and crossed the river Sava. An army corps under the command of the emperor occupied the region between the Danube and the Sava, including the city of Sirmium. Another corps led by general Theodore Batatzes besieged the fort at Zemun, and a third expedition reached the Timiş valley in present-day Banat. The Byzantine troops were quickly withdrawn from the Danube-Sava region as soon as the Hungarian army returning from Halych counter-attacked, and the results of the 1150 campaign were indecisive. On the other hand, Géza II's attacks on the Byzantine territories (April 1151) had no concrete results.[237]

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[235] Kinnamos, III, 6–9 (transl. Brand, 83–90); Niketas Choniates, *Manuel Comnenos*, II. 7 (ed. Van Dieten, 93; transl. Magoulias, 54); Chalandon 1912, 384–391, 401; Ostrogorsky 1956, 412; Urbansky 1968, 48–49, 52, 71–75; Moravcsik 1970, 80; Kosztolnyik 1987, 146–147; Makk 1989, 48–51; Fine 1991, 236–244; Magdalino 1993, 54–55; Stephenson 2000, 225–226, 267; Curta 2006, 329–330.

[236] Magdalino 1993, 55.

[237] Kinnamos, III, 10, 11 (transl. Brand, 90–93); Niketas Choniates, *Manuel Comnenos,* II. 7 (ed. Van Dieten, 92–93; transl. Magoulias, 54); Chalandon 1912, 402–408; Urbansky 1968, 72–77; Moravcsik 1970, 81; Kosztolnyik 1987, 147–148; Makk 1989, 52–56; Magdalino

After 1150, the emperor appointed his cousin Andronikos as duke of Niš in 1153. He had under command the entire territory from Niš to Belgrade. That does not seem to have been a wise decision, as Andronikos had his mind on the imperial throne, and opened negotiations with Géza II, to whom he promised the duchy in exchange for the the Hungarian king's support. Soon after that, Andronikos was arrested (1154), but Géza, who does not seem to have been aware of his ally's fate, made a bold attack on Braničevo and Belgrade together with the Cumans, who were then raiding in the Danube region. In 1155, Manuel decided to retaliate, fearing an alliance between Géza II and intended to make an alliance with Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. The navy was again sent to the Danube, but the Hungarian king quickly asked for peace and returned all prisoners taken in the previous year.[238]

The events of 1155 led Manuel to a re-shuffle of the defense policy on the Danube. After 1155, the system of fortifications on the river bank and in the interior was reinforced. Manuel was fully aware of the strategic value that such forts as Belgrade and Braničevo had in the war against Hungary. The reconstruction work archaeologically documented on both sites may be dated to the mid-12th century. At Braničevo, a new fortification was built in Veliki Grad after 1156 next to the ramparts of the 6th-century walls of Viminacium, themselves reused after 1018 (fig. 14). The area of the city was thus doubled, with the purpose to accommodate the troops brought from the south for the operations in the region of Braničevo. In Belgrade, a new fort of 60 × 136 m was built inside the area of the 6th-century city of Singidunum. This fort, which was separated from the rest of the settlement by a ditch became the residence of the commander (fig. 15).[239]

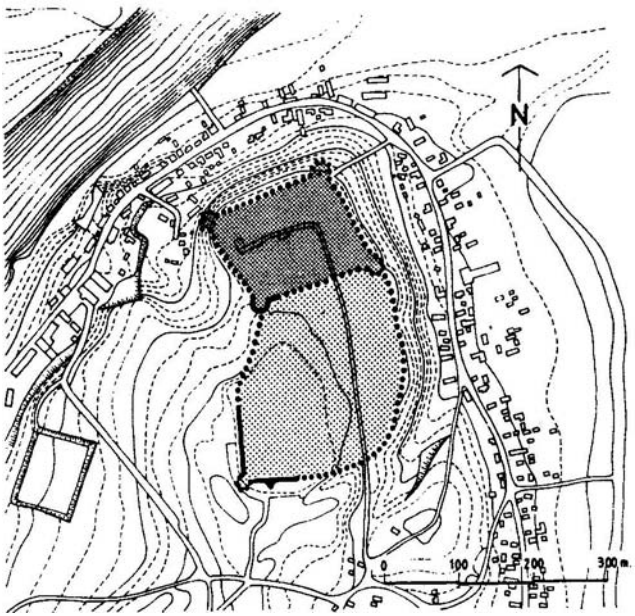
Manuel also entered an alliance with Halych against Hungary. This alliance was also directed against the Cumans, who were at that time in conflict with the Rus'[240] The new alliance allowed for the concentration of the war efforts in the western part of the Danube frontier.

1993, 54–55; Stephenson 2000, 230–231 (according to his own chronology); Kostova 2008 b, 271–272.

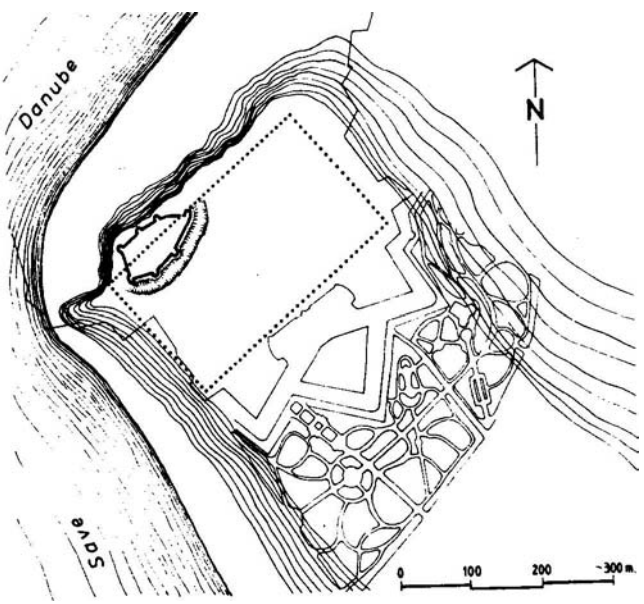
238 Kinnamos, III, 17, 19 (transl. Brand, 100, 103–105); Niketas Choniates, *Manuel Comnenos*, 3 (ed. Van Dieten, 101–103; transl. Magoulias, 58–59); Chalandon 1912, 409–414; Bănescu 1946, 43, 161; Urbansky 1968, 80–84; Şesan 1978, 50; Kosztolnyik 1987, 148–150; Makk 1989, 60–62; Magdalino 1993, 56–58; Stephenson 2000, 233–234; Curta 2006, 330–331; Kostova 2008 b, 272; Stojkovski 2009, 389–390.

239 Popović, Ivanišević 1988, 178; Maksimović, Popović 1990, 217–219; Popović 1991, 169–185; Milošević 1991, 187–195; Maksimović, Popović 1993, 129–133; Stephenson 2000, 241–245; Kalić 2003, 91–96; Curta 2006, 331–332.

240 Wasilewski 1964, 481–482; Moravcsik 1970, 78–92; Diaconu 1978, 94–95; Angold 1984, 176.



14. The fort of Braničevo (after Popović 1991, 171)



15. The fort of Belgrade (after Popović 1991, 172)

In addition, Manuel gave his support to claimants to the Hungarian crown, all of whom were expected to follow a pro-Byzantine policy. First Stephen, Géza II's brother, then Béla, King Stephen III's elder brother fulfilled, if only briefly, Manuel's ambition to turn Hungary into a client state. A marriage was planned between Béla and Manuel's daughter, Maria. Stephen III quickly offered Sirmium and Dalmatia, the terms of the treaty he concluded with Manuel in 1164. The recovery of Sirmium led to the organization of a new duchy centered upon that city, but smaller than the earlier one. Even so, Manuel continued to support a third claimant to the Hungarian throne, a man named Stephen who had occupied the fortress Zemun in 1164. Betrayed in his expectations, Stephen III attacked the Byzantine Empire in 1166, and following a victory over duke Michael Gabras, Sirmium was again occupied, if only for a while, by the Hungarians. In Dalmatia, the Hungarians meanwhile won another victory near Split against the duke of that province, Nikephoros Chaluphes. This time, the emperor's reaction was quick and effective. An army under the command of Andronikos Kontostephanos crushed the Hungarian at Zemun (July 8th, 1167).[241] Meanwhile, the general Leo Batatzes attacked Hungary through one of the Carpathian passes (most probably Oituz).[242] According to John Kinnamos, this expedition went "by way of the regions near the so-called Euxine, whence no one had ever assailed them." Once in Transylvania, the Byzantine army "after they had passed through some wearisome and rugged regions and had gone through a land entirely bereft of men, they burst into Hungary; encountering many extremely populous villages, they collected a great quantity of booty and slew many men, but took captive many more." Finally, a third army under the command of John Dukas made a similar maneuver, entering Hungary from the, somewhere near the border with Halych.[243]

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[241] Kinnamos, V, 5–6, 8, 10, 14–16 (transl. Brand, 160–165, 167–171, 174, 179–186); Niketas Choniates, *Manuel Comnenos*, 4 (ed. Van Dieten, 127–128, 132–135; transl. Magoulias, 72–73, 75–77); Chalandon 1912, 470–487; Wasilewski 1964, 481; Urbansky 1968, 85, 93–103; Moravcsik 1970, 82–88; Kosztolnyik 1987, 185, 187; Makk 1989, 85–92, 99–100; Magdalino 1993, 79–83; Stephenson 2000, 247–260; Curta 2006, 332–333; Kostova 2008 b, 272–273.

[242] Cihodaru 1979, 171 suggested that the army marched through the Bugeac (southern Bessarabia), which would mean that it crossed the Danube at Isaccea.

[243] Kinnamos, VI. 3 (transl. Brand, 195–196); Niketas Choniates, *Manuel Comnenos*, V, 1 (ed. Van Dieten, 151–157; transl. Magoulias, 86–89); Frances 1959, 58–59; Urbansky 1968, 104–106; Moravcsik 1970, 84–85; Stănescu 1974, 407; Diaconu 1978, 102–103; Kosztolnyik 1987, 187, 189, 191; Makk 1989, 100–101; Stephenson 2000, 260–261; Haldon 2001, 138–139; Birkenmeier 2002, 119–120; Curta 2006, 333; Kostova 2008 b, 273–274. Some have seen this

Leo Batatzes' army also included "a large group of Vlachs, who are said to be formerly colonists from the people of Italy." The word ὄμιλος used by Kinnamos means "mob" and concerns a unit of irregulars, recruited most probably from Dobrudja, the region from which the attack was launched.[244] There is, however, no indication of a military organization of the local Romanian population in Dobrudja. On the contrary, the impression one gets is that the Byzantines had to improvise, as they recruited unskilled men (Romanians in this case) to complement the apparently small number of professional soldiers taking part in the expedition. There is no proof that those Vlachs were from the Stara Planina Mountains or that they were organized in some kind of unit specializing in fighting in the mountains.[245]

The victory of 1167 was the final moment of the Byzantine-Hungarian wars under Manuel I. The Byzantine control over the disputed territories in Dalmatia, Croatia and in the Middle Danubian region was sanctioned by the peace treaty of July 1167. The same victory curbed any Cuman attacks for a while, as it demonstrated the capability of the Byzantine army to wage war on a large scale in the regions under its control.[246] The hegemony of the Byzantine Empire was restored in the western Balkans and on the Danube, but not for too long.

After Manuel's death in 1180, Prince Béla, crowned king of Hungary by Manuel after Stephen III's death (with the name Bela III, 1172–1196) took the opportunity to recover Dalmatia and Sirmium. Involved in conflicts at the Byzantine court, he attacked the empire under the pretext of defending the interests of Alexios II Comnenos against the usurper Andronikos. He therefore annexed a large region extending from Sirmium to Sofia after two campaigns carried out in 1182–1183 in cooperation with the great zhupan of Serbia, Stephen Nemanja. Andronikos Comnenos' usurpation was also used as a pretext by the king of Sicily, William II (1166–1189) for launching an attack on the Byzantine Empire. That maneuver was meant to give support to a claimant to the Byzantine throne calling himself Alexios II (the real Alexios II had in fact been killed by Andronikos). On June 24th 1185, the Norman army conquered Dyrrachion, at the western

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expedition as aimed to counteract the Hungarian expansion into the regions south and south-east of the Carpathian Mountains (Cândea 1999, 153–155).

244 Stănescu 1971, 589; Stănescu 1974, 407–408; Năsturel 1969, 178–184; Curta 2006, 316; Kostova 2008 b, 274.

245 Năsturel 1969, 179.

246 Năsturel 1969, 183–184.

terminal of *Via Egnatia*, connecting Thessaloniki to Constantinople. The Normans then sacked Thessaloniki on August 24th, 1185, but were stopped at Dimitritsi in southern Thrace on November 7th, 1185.[247]

The new emperor Isaac II Angelos made peace with Béla. The Hungarian king offered him his daughter Margaret (Mary) in marriage, with the region Belgrade-Niš (which had been conquered from the Byzantine Empire in 1182–1183) as dowry. In exchange for that, Hungary kept Dalmatia and Sirmium.[248] To cover the wedding expenses, Isaac II imposed a surtax, which was the immediate cause of the rebellion of the Vlachs and Bulgarians in the Stara Planina Mountains. As Niketas Choniates wrote, when the emperor Isaac II was encamped at Kypsella in Thrace [today Ypsala], two leaders of the Romanian (Vlach) population from the Haemus Mountains requested to be recruited in the army and be awarded by imperial rescript a certain estate (χωρίον) situated in the vicinity of Mount Haemus, which would provide them with a little revenue.[249] The two leaders' names were Peter and Asan. Peter's real name appears to have been Theodore, but he adopted Peter in reference either to the rebel Peter Deljan or to the 10th-century emperor of Bulgaria. That the rebellion began in October 1185 has been demonstrated by Günter Prinzing.[250]

This book is not concerned with the state created by the Assenids. Instead, the following considerations focus only on events that caused the end of the Byzantine military organization along the Danube. In fact, one of the reasons the rebels were so successful is that some of them had military experience. The appearance under Alexios I Comnenos of Vlach military units recruited from the mountain regions may have spurred the rise of a military elite. The forts in the Stara Planina mentioned by Niketas Choniates were most likely centers of that elite's regional power.[251] The military skills of those who rebelled in 1185 were the unforeseen consequence of the Comnenian emperor's policy of local recruitment. The reforms introduced by Alexios I Comnenos increased the military capability of the empire through support granted to the pronoiars. *Pronoia* was a lifetime possession bestowed to aristocrats who were thus obliged to

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247 Ostrogorsky 1956, 422–426; Urbansky 1968, 109–111, 122; Moravcsik 1970, 90–92; Kosztolnyik 1987, 207–208; Makk 1989, 115–117; Fine 1994, 6–7; Treadgold 1997, 652–654; Stephenson 2000, 281–283.

248 Guilland 1964, 125; Moravcsik 1970, 93; Kosztolnyik 1987, 209; Makk 1989, 120; Fine 1994, 9–10; Treadgold 1997, 657; Stephenson 2000, 283–284; Vásáry 2005, 14.

249 Niketas Choniates, *Isaac Angelos*, I. 5 (ed. Van Dieten, 369; transl. Magoulias, 204).

250 Prinzing 1999–2000, 257–265.

251 Iosipescu 1994, 252.

ensure recruits from their estates. In the long term, the *pronoia* is responsible for the centrifugal trends in Byzantine politics, especially after it became hereditary (1258), but in the late 11th and early 12th century, the reorganization of the professional army on that basis was a success story. The small farming property of the *stratiotai* survived, but the development of a feudal army not unlike those of Western Europe is obvious. The recruitment on the basis of local (and therefore often ethnic) criteria was encouraged by the rise of the pronoiars, and that contributed to a rapid decline of units of foreign mercenaries. Several groups of Pecheneg and Cumans were settled in the European provinces of the Empire, former prisoners of war thus becoming *stratiotai*. The military profession was again attractive to peasants, even if they happened to be were tenants of the pronoiars. According to Niketas Choniates, "everyone wanted to enlist in the army (…) while some ran away from their charge of grooming horses and others, washing away the mud from brick making and wiping off the soot from working the forge, presented themselves to the recruiting officers. After handing over a Persian horse or paying down a few gold coins, they were enrolled in the military registers without due examination and immediately were provided with imperial letters awarding them parcels of dewy land, wheat bearing fields, and Roman tributaries to serve them as slaves."[252]

The request of the two Vlach brothers Asan and Theodore (Peter) was rejected. Furthermore they were apparently humiliated in front of the emperor, perhaps with his approval. This fact sparked the rebellion which soon found supporters among the cattle and sheep owners affected by the tax increases. From the very beginning, therefore, this was a rebellion of mountaineers with considerable military skills. In his account of Isaac II Angelos' campaign against the rebels (October 1187), Niketas Choniates criticizes the emperor for not dispatching soldiers to the forts, most likely those in the Stara Planina Mountains and on the Danube.[253] Instead, according to Choniates, the rebels put those forts to good use and to their advantage.[254] The development of the region in which those mountain forts were located is betrayed by the surge in coin finds of the second half of the 12th century, which have been discovered in the area between

[252] Niketas Choniates, *Manuel Comnenos*, VII (ed. Van Dieten, 209; transl. Magoulias, 118–119); Ostrogorsky 1956, 392–393; Ostrogorsky 1970, 41–54.

[253] Niketas Choniates, *Isaac Angelos*, II. 1 (ed. Van Dieten, 394; transl. Magoulias, 217). For the campaign, see Tsankova-Petkova 1978, 116–118.

[254] Niketas Choniates, *Isaac Angelos*, I. 4 (ed. Van Dieten, 369; transl. Magoulias, 204).

Tărnovo and Šumen.[255] The rebellion started in Tărnovo, a town which, according to Niketas Choniates, was "the best fortified and most excellent of all the cities along the Haemus, encompassed by mighty walls, divided by a river stream, and built on a ridge of the mountain." Tărnovo became a real capital, a fortified town in which buildings symbolizing political and religious power—the imperial palace, churches, later the patriarchal church and palace—were later erected on the hill now called Tsarevets (the palace of the tsars, churches, and later on the patriarchal church and palace).[256] From this initial center, the movement spread to the entire territory of the formerly Bulgarian state, at the same time gaining a new political goal—complete independence from Byzantium, as symbolized by the use of the title of emperor (tsar). The events of 1185 eventually led to the rise of a state which for all practical purposes was regarded as the heir of early medieval Bulgaria.

The population involved in this movement was both Romanian (Vlach) and Bulgarian. Nationalistic concerns have long been on the mind of Bulgarian historians rejecting the participation of the Vlachs and the Romanian (Vlach) origin of the movement's leaders, although both Byzantine and western sources are quite clear in that respect.[257] Some have gone as far as to claim that the Assenids descended from a community of Turkic Bulgars who had resisted Slavicization until the 12th century.[258] Others have recently claimed a Cuman origin for the Assenids on the basis of nothing else but the supposedly Turkic origin of the name Asan.[259] Little attention has been paid to the fact that Cuman names were given to people who were not viewed as, nor claimed to be Cumans, such as many Romanians in medieval Walachia and Moldavia.[260] To be sure, a mixed, Vlach-Cuman origin of Peter and Asan is not impossible. However, the name Asan (if it is Turkic at all) was given to the son of a high-status man, who would use a foreign name for his child to distinguish him (and himself) from the other Vlachs. Ever since the invasion of 1122, which had

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255 Oberländer-Târnoveanu 2003, 360.

256 Niketas Choniates, *Alexios Angelos*, I. 5 (ed. Van Dieten, 470; transl. Magoulias, 258); Akropolites, 137; Gjuzelev 1991, 95–98; Dochev 2002, 673–674; Žekova 2004, 344–349; Curta 2006, 320–321, 360.

257 For the history of the historiographic dispute between Romanian and Bulgarian historians surrounding the origin of the Assenids and the (ethnic) character of the state, see Tanaşoca 1989, 153–181; Lazăr 2005, 3–31.

258 Dimitrov 1993, 103.

259 Vásáry 2005, 38–41, who also quoted the previous studies.

260 See Spinei 2009, 311–330.

reached Thrace, Cumans lived in close contact with the Vlachs, for example, in the region of Moglena.[261] It is important to note that during that invasion, warriors had brought their families with them, and it is reasonable to believe that at least some Cuman women were taken captive after the victory of Beroe.

The role of the Vlachs in the rebellion and the rise of the Assenid state is clearly spelled out by various sources, such as Niketas Choniates, Geoffroy of Villehardouin and Robert de Clari. The Byzantine historian even mentioned the language of the Vlachs which was apparently spoken by a priest whom the rebels had captured,[262] while the French chroniclers wrote about *Blaquie* and *Blacs*. Of crucial significance in this respect is that Pope Innocentius III (1198–1216) knew very well that the people of Kaloyannes, the third, younger brother who took over the power in 1197, were of Roman origin (*audito quod de nobili Urbis Romae prosapia progenitores tui originem traxerint*).[263] A particularly interesting testimony about the ethnic character of the state established by the Peter and Asan brothers is that of the *Heimskringla*, written by Snorri Sturlusson in Iceland around 1230. The region in Thrace in which the Byzantine-Pecheneg war of 1091 took place is called *Blökumannaland* ("the land of the Vlachs") which is evidently an anachronism, but reflects the situation at the time Snorri wrote Heimskringla.[264] Those testimonies thus represent a body of uncontrovertible evidence about the participation of the Vlachs in the rise of what is now commonly referred to as the "Second Bulgarian Kingdom."[265]

The rebels led by Peter and Asan occupied the mountain passes in the eastern range of the Stara Planina Mountains, but were pushed back by the Byzantine army (April 1186). At this point, the intervention of the Cumans was decisive in the ultimate victory of the rebels. From this

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[261] Anastasijević, Ostrogorsky 1951, 22–29.

[262] Niketas Choniates, *Alexios Angelos*, I. 5 (ed. Dieten, 468; transl. Magoulias, 257).

[263] Wolff 1949, 190–192, 201–202; Brătianu 1980, 75–78; Tanaşoca 1981, 582; Vásáry 2005, 26–27.

[264] Pintescu 1999, 41–61; Spinei 2006, 143–1144. Others have dated the events to which Heimskringla refers to 1122, but that does not change the issue of the (ethnic) anachronism (Diaconu 1978, 72–77; Bløndal 1981, 148–151; Meško 2007, 9–13). A third opinion linking the events to the 1114 expedition north of the river Danube (in which the Vlachs in question were north, not south of the Danube) cannot be accepted, because no major battle is known to have been fought there to match the account in the Heimskringla. See Gyóni 1956, 303–311; Horedt 1969, 180–181; Mărculeţ 2005, 101–103; Mărculeţ 2010 b, 585–594.

[265] And has been recognized as such by several historians: Wolff 1949, 180–181; Angold 1984, 273; Cheynet 1990, 450; Stephenson 2000, 288–294; Fine 1994, pp. 12–13.

moment onwards, the Cumans would get involved in several campaigns until 1206.[266] Emperor Isaac II's expedition of October 1187 was a disaster, despite the victory his troops obtained with much difficulty at Lardeas on October 11th, 1187. The following campaign interrupted by winter, led to another failure, as after a long siege in the spring of 1188, Lovitzos (Lovеč) could not be taken. Through the peace concluded in the summer of 1188, the rebels obtained the entire region north of a line linking Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, and Akhtopol. According to Niketas Choniates, the rebels "were not content merely to preserve their own possessions and to assume control of the government of Mysia; they also were compelled to wreak havoc against the Roman territories and unite the political power of Mysia and Bulgaria into one empire as of old."[267]

After 1188, what had started as a domestic rebellion turned into a conflict between two states. Peter had claimed the imperial title since the beginning of the rebellion, and he even wanted to be recognized as emperor of the Greeks by Emperor Frederick Barbarossa when the imperial army crossed the Balkans in the direction of Constantinople at the beginning of the Third Crusade. The Serbs of Stephen Nemanja and the Vlachs and Bulgarians led by Peter offered their alliance against Isaac II, but the German emperor chose peace with the Byzantine Empire. To judge by contemporary accounts, the forces commanded by Peter consisted of 40,000 Vlach and Cuman archers.[268]

Isaac II resumed hostilities in 1190, but the Vlach-Bulgarian army inflicted a serious defeat on the Byzantine army in the pass of Trjavna. Over the next five years, the military confrontations between the Byzantines, one one hand, and the Vlachs and the Bulgarians on the other hand, took place mostly south of the Stara Planina Mountains, in Thrace. In 1195, the Assenids conquered a region in the valley of the river Strymon (Struma).[269] To the north, their state seems to have extended all the way to the Danube since the beginning of the rebellion. In a letter to his son Henry, Emperor Frederick Barbarossa wrote that "Kalopeter the Vlach and

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[266] Diaconu 1978, 114–119, 130–133; Vásáry 2005, 17, 21, 42; Lazăr 2006, 17.

[267] Niketas Choniates, *Isaac Angelos*, I. 5; II. 1 (ed. Van Dieten, 372–374, 394–399; transl. Magoulias, 206, 217–219); Tsankova-Petkova 1978, 106–119; Tsankova-Petkova 1980, 61–63; Stephenson 2000, 290–292; Vásáry 2005, 43–44; Lazăr 2010, 12–13.

[268] Ansbertus, 58 (transl. Loud, 84); Wolff 1949, 184; Fine 1994, 24; Iosipescu 1994, 265–268; Stephenson 2000, 294–300; Vásáry 2005, 44.

[269] Niketas Choniates, *Isaac Angelos*, III. 3 (ed. Van Dieten, 429–430; transl. Magoulias, 236–237); Akropolites, 133; Wolff 1949, 184–188; Kosztolnyik 1987, 217; Stephenson 2000, 300–306; Vásáry 2005, 45–47; Lazăr 2006, 18–19.

his brother Assan with the Vlachs subject to them were exercising tyrannical rule over much of Bulgaria, and especially in the region where the Danube flows into the sea".[270] This means that in 1189 Dobrudja or a good part of it was already under the control of the rebels. Gheorghe Mănucu-Adameşteanu is therefore wrong when arguing that before 1204 the Assenid state did not include Dobrudja.[271] Knowing that the rebels threatened early on Thrace, the province closest to the capital, most resources were concentrated for its defense. Maintaining large numbers on the Danube frontier, which by now was accessible only the sea, would have been a useless effort. As in the case of the rebellion of 1072, the ultimate bastion of Byzantine authority in the Danube region was Isaccea. In 1190, Isaac II Angelos decided to move again against Bulgaria. The land army besieged Tărnovo, but without any success, for the Cumans arrived to attack the besieging army. The Byzantines were defeated after they withdrew in the mountains, in that already mentioned ambush of the Trjavna Pass. This campaign is covered by both Niketas Choniates and George Akropolites. Choniates, in a speech addressed to the emperor in 1190, refers to fighting taking place in the "Danube islands": "(Istros) is after many years struck by Romaic [Byzantine] oars."[272] This, as Genoveva Tsankova-Petkova has demonstrated, is only wishful thinking. It appears that the idea of sending the navy to the Danube in order to hinder the crossing of the river by the Cumans was never put to practice, because of unknown reasons. The speech included congratulations made before the launching of the campaign.[273] Be as it may, the aforementioned plan may be associated with messages the emperor sent to Isaccea, as illustrated by two of his seals found on the site.[274]

A direct consequence of the defeat inflicted upon the Byzantine army in the Trjavna Pass was the abandonment of Varna, the most important port on the maritime way to the Danube (it was recovered only in 1193). Mesembria was also taken at about the same time.[275] Varna was again retaken by Bulgarians on March 24th 1201, after a three day siege. This

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[270] Ansbertus, 33 (transl. Loud, 64): *in Bulgariae maxima parte ac versus Danubium, quousque mare influat, quidam Kalopetrus Flachus ac frater eius Assanius cum subditis Flachis tyranizabat*; Brătescu 1919, 22.

[271] Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 206–209.

[272] Niketas Choniates, *Orationes*, A (ed. Van Dieten, 3–4).

[273] Tsankova-Petkova 1981, 181–185. Gjuzelev 1986, 205 admitted that the expedition to the Danube was real.

[274] Barnea 1971, 361; Barnea 1997, 359; Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2001 a, 206.

[275] Wolff 1949, 184–188; Guilland 1964, 135; Gjuzelev 1986, 205–208.

was the last point the Empire still controlled north of the Stara Planina Mountains. Constanteia was also taken in 1202. The Bulgarian occupation of those port cities made it impossible for the Byzantine navy to get to the mouths of the Danube.[276] As a matter of fact, no other attempt to attack Bulgaria from the Danube is known after 1190. The Danube region was lost, although it was partially recovered for a brief while by Emperor Michael VIII Paleologos (1259–1282). In a speech Manuel Holobolos wrote for the occasion, Michael is praised for having forged in 1273 an alliance against Bulgaria with the Mongol warlord Nogai against Bulgaria, as "the many Paristrian islands" returned to Byzantine control.[277] Holobolos' figure of speech does not refer to some small islands in the Danube Delta, but to northern Dobrudja, previously known as Western Mesopotamia. During the third quarter of the fourteenth century, this territory was a Mongol-Byzantine condominium centered upon Isaccea.[278]

The western part of the Danube region was also lost shortly after the rebellion in Bulgaria. In 1189, when the crusaders entered the Balkans on their way to Constantinople, there was still a duke in Braničevo (*dux de Brandicz*). According to Ansbertus' *Historia de expeditione Friderici imperatoris*, the troops under the command of the duke intercepted the crusaders moving to Niš.[279] Stephen Nemanja and Peter, the leader of the Vlachs and of the Bulgarians, offered their support to Frederick I Barbarossa for a common war against Isaac II, but the German emperor preferred to maintain good relations with Byzantium.[280] Soon after the incidents of 1189, there is no mention of Byzantine authority in the region. In 1190, in cooperation with Peter, Stephen Nemanja, who had already started the expansion of Serbia in the central part of the Balkans, took over the region of Braničevo-Niš from the Byzantines. Isaac II responded with an expedition against Serbia in 1191. After a victory won somewhere in the valley of the Morava river, a peace was concluded, which returned Niš, Braničevo and Belgrade to the empire.[281] King Béla III of Hungary took advantage of the

[276] Gjuzelev 1978, 53; Gjuzelev 1981, 19; Gjuzelev 1986, 209; Stephenson 2000, 310.

[277] Laurent 1945, 188; Stănescu 1974, 412; Năsturel 2003, 351.

[278] Laurent 1945, 184–198; Bănescu 1946, 113–115; Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1995–1996, 208–209.

[279] Ansbertus, 27–28 (transl. Loud, 60); Stephenson 2000, 295.

[280] Ansbertus, 58 (transl. Loud, 84–85); Wolff 1949, 184; Guilland 1964, 132–133; Iosipescu 1994, 265–268; Stephenson 2000, 294–300; Curta 2006, 361.

[281] Niketas Choniates, *Isaac Angelos*, III (ed. Van Dieten, p. 434; trad. Magoulias, pp. 238–239); Niketas Choniates, *Orationes*, D (ed. Van Dieten, 27–33); Guilland 1964, 135–136; Makk 1989, 123; Fine 1994, 25–26; Stephenson 2000, 301; Vásáry 2005, 45–46; Curta 2006, 335.

defeat inflicted upon Nemanja to attack Serbia in the winter of 1192–1193. The Hungarians occupied an area south of Braničevo, from which they eventually withdrew at the request of Pope Celestin III. The Byzantines remained in control of the region between Niš, Braničevo and Belgrade until 1199, when it fell to the Bulgarians. The privilege granted to Venice in November 1198 mentions *provincia Nisi* and *Uranisoue* (Braničevo)[282] as under Byzantine control. However, in 1202 Braničevo must have been under Bulgarian rule, for the local bishop was a suffragan of the Bulgarian patriarch. The Bulgarians may have taken Braničevo in 1199, knowing that Kaloyannes campaigned in the area in that year, as mentioned in his correspondence with Pope Innocent III.[283]

Thus ended the dispute between Hungary and the Byzantine Empire for domination in the Middle Danube region. The geopolitical situation of the Danube area entered a new phase marked by the confrontation between Bulgaria, Hungary, and the Cumans.

[282] Tafel, *Urkunden I*, 261.
[283] Curta 2006, 382.

CONCLUSION

John Tzimiskes' conquest of the Lower Danube region was the unexpected result of the war against Svyatoslav, who, taking the chance offered by Nikephoros Phokas' strategic mistake, had attempted to establish his domination over that region. "Unexpected" in this context refers to the lack of any evidence that Nikephoros Phokas's goal was either to destroy or to occupy Bulgaria. His intention in 968, when he summoned Svyatoslav's assistance, was to keep Bulgaria under Byzantine hegemony, as a buffer state against attacks from the north. His intention was however made irrelevant by Svyatoslav's plans to ensconce himself in the region by the Black Sea and the river Danube. The military operations carried out on the Lower Danube by Byzantium's land and naval forces in 971 were only a reaction to the plans of the Rus' prince. The unfolding of the political events had left a power vacuum in Bulgaria, which John Tzimiskes's conquest now attempted to solve. The restoration of the Byzantine domination in Bulgaria was initially conceived as a means to prevent future Rus' attacks. That was the primary purpose of dispatching troops from Thrace in the new theme of Ioannoupolis, and that was the reason for which no such forces were stationed in western or southern Bulgaria, where the Byzantines wages a comparatively longer and much more difficult war against the rebels of 976 led by Samuel. The occupation of those regions was not regarded as necessary, or even possible, for no threat from the Rus' or any other enemy was expected there. The same strategic goal explains why a katepanate called Western Mesopotamia was established south of the Danube Delta, in the region commonly crossed by the Rus' on their way to Constantinople.

This neglect of the other parts of Bulgaria turned out to be another strategic mistake, with very serious consequences. Once the rebels of 976 revived the Bulgarian state, they effectively became a mortal threat to all Byzantine possessions in the Balkans. The was against Samuel led to a new organization of the Danube region, after the territories lost in 986 were recovered and new ones conquered, all the way to Sirmium. This organization was implemented in three stages (1000, 1002, 1018–1019) and consisted of an extension of the theme of Dristra to the west, in addition to the creation of another theme of Sirmium. In the southern parts of the former Bulgarian state the themes of Bulgaria and Serbia were established. The occupation was based on garrisons in forts, some of which

were restored Roman forts, others built anew, especially next to the fords across the Danube. There were altogether fewer fortifications than those in existence between the 2nd and the 7th century, an indication that the military forces available were not as numerous as in Antiquity.

Since the Rus' had ceased to be a threat to the Danube frontier since the age of Basil II, there was no need of a navy any longer. The new enemies, Pechenegs and Hungarians, had no naval forces. The defense system developed by Basil II was therefore based only on monitoring the crossing points around the main fords, which mounted warriors could use to cross the Danube. This implied a small number of forts manned by *stratiotai*. This strategy failed in the long run, because forts around the fords or other points along the Danube could not effectively prevent the Pecheneg, Uze and Cuman raids, many of which took place in the winter, when the entire river was frozen. The alternative solution adopted by Michael IV in 1036, and developed by Constantine IX in 1045, was to appease the Pechenegs, first by means of bribes, next by allowing them to settle in the lands south of the Danube, as frontier guards. Such a policy proved effective for as long as the forts opened for contacts with the barbarians remained under the control of the central administration, *i.e.* until the secession of 1072. That secession marked the turning point in the history of the region, as the Pechenegs previously established in the empire took over the forts, including Dristra, soon to be joined by the Pechenegs who had remained in the lands north of the river.

The numerous raids and invasions across the Danube led to the adoption of a third solution, namely moving the defense line from the Danube to the Stara Planina range. According to Paul Stephenson, this solution was adopted in the 12th century because of an ever diminishing number of troops available for the defense of the Danube.[1] Under the new circumstances, the province of Paradunavon became a half-open space. Only a few points on the river (Isaccea, Hârşova, Axiopolis and Dristra) remained under direct Byzantine control. Those were outposts needed for the monitoring of the fords, as well as anchorages for the navy based in Anchialos. Nonetheless, it is a mistake to draw the conclusion that the Byzantines had by then been completely lost the region along the Danube.[2] The lands between the Danube and the Stara Planina remained a periphery, but a periphery *of* Byzantium.

[1] Stephenson 2000, 103–105.
[2] Tăpkova-Zaimova 1980, 336.

It is quite possible that the imperial authority at Dristra was exercised through some some local leaders—either Pechenegs or Cumans—who, although subjects to the emperors, were for all practical purposes autonomous.[3] This was after all the status granted earlier to Kegen for *Patzinakia*. An agreement with Pecheneg chieftains in Paradunavon could have been reached in the aftermath of the victory of 1091. That is why Gheorghe I. Brătianu has long suggested that the appearance in the late eleventh century of Turkic autonomous polities in Dobrudja, all of which were politically dependent upon the empire.[4] Under such circumstances, the presence of *tagmata* commanded by a duke was no more necessary for the defense of that remote province. The lack of any information about commanders in the cities on the Danube cities is in itself significant. The region continued to be part of the empire, but the Byzantine defense line was moved to the south, on the Stara Planina Mountains.

The transformation of the region between the Danube and the Stara Planina Mountains into a half-open space (ἐρημία) may have been inspired by the experience on the eastern frontier, where Arab and especially Seljuk attacks have rendered obsolete the network of fortifications. The solution adopted in the East was to turn the borderlands into a "no man's land," with no population whatsoever, in order to create difficult conditions for any invasion which would suffer because of lack of supplies.[5] After 1081, the eastern frontier was *de facto* outside imperial control of the empire, with only a few isolated forts left as residences for the dukes.[6]

The invasions of 1027, 1032–1036, 1047 and 1065 show that how ineffective the blockade of the fords across Danube really was when confronted with large numbers of nomadic warriors looking for booty in cities and the countryside. Moving the defense line on the mountain range provided the opportunity to fight the nomads in an environment with which they were not familiar and in which ambushes could easily be set up in mountain passes, which were altogether much easier to defend than the line of the Danube. Much like in the east, the region deserted in the north, between the mountains and the Danube, was meant to operate as a "no man's land."[7] William of Tyre noted that Byzantines had depopulated the

[3] Shepard 1979, 238.
[4] Brătianu 1999, 234.
[5] Ahrweiler 1974, 219–221. For the features of the eastern frontier, see Holmes 2002, 83–104.
[6] Cheynet 2001 b, 65.
[7] Magdalino 1993, 134.

former ancient provinces of Dacia Ripensis and Dacia Mediterranea for military purposes: *in utraque videlicet Dacia, etiam hodie non permittunt habitatores introire*. Likewise, Epirus, a region that could be crossed in four days, was left *deserta et invia et alimentis carentia*.[8] Although this account refers to the First Crusade, it is likely that the situation described is that of William's lifetime, for it does not appear in earlier sources. In other words, William must have experienced the situation himself, when in 1169 he traveled from Constantinople to Rome. This, then, was the strategy applied by Manuel I, although William of Tyre's authorial finger appears to point to Basil II. Modern historians emphasize the deliberate nature of this policy aimed at creating buffer zones next to the frontiers.[9] If areas next to the frontier were depopulated, then there was no booty—goods or prisoners—to attract the Pechenegs or the Cumans. There is no evidence that the nomads ever intended, of their own will, to settle in the lands south of the Danube. All known cases of settlement were the result of Byzantine decisions and took place under Byzantine supervision.

The events of 1095 have demonstrated the advantage of placing the defense line on the Stara Planina Mountains. This new direction taken by the defense system under Alexios I is strikingly similar to the decision taken in 275 by Emperor Aurelian, who abandoned Dacia north of the Danube in favor of a better defense on the line of the river. In both cases, this strategy of retrenchment was a response to increasing pressure on the earlier line of defense and to diminishing resources. The only difference is that unlike Aurelian, Alexios I did not entirely abandon the position to the north of the new line of defense (the province of Paradunavon), but turned into a half-open space in front of the theme of Anchialos.

The depopulation of areas between the Danube and the Stara Planina Mountains probably began shortly after the Pecheneg crisis of 1047–1053, and was definitely well on its way during the secession of 1072–1091. When the former Hungarian king Salomon withdrew to the Danube after being defeated by Nicholas Mavrokatakalon in 1087, he had to go through "deserted places" (*errantes itaque ferebantur per inania*), before reaching a *castrum desertum et vacuum*, which was located somewhere on the bank of the river.[10] The archaeological excavations in northern Bulgaria have revealed clusters of settlements in the highlands, along the Danube,

[8] William of Tyre, II, 4 (ed. Babcock, Krey, I, 122).
[9] Hendy 1985, 39.
[10] SRH, I, 410.

and on the Black Sea coast. There are, however, no settlements at all in the entire region between the Danube and the Stara Planina Mountains, which could be dated to the 11th and 12th centuries.[11] During the former century, there is a visible increase of population in all forts along the Danube, which in most cases witnessed the growth of a civilian settlement outside the fort's walls (Garvăn, Isaccea, Nufăru, Tulcea, Hârşova). By the 12th century, however, there is evidence of a serious demographic decline, with most extramural settlements being abandoned, while in other cases the occupation ceased inside the fort as well.

The demographic decline in the Danube forts must be regarded in connection with the withdrawal of the defense line to the Stara Planina Mountains. This made most forts along the Danube obsolete, and any efforts to repair or rebuild them utterly unnecessary. The forts had failed in their mission to prevent invasions, and no troops left behind would have been able to win against the Pechenegs and the Cumans. Military successes, if any, obtained by the Byzantines against the raiders were always caused by their ability to move behind the enemy lines or to attack the Pechenegs or the Cumans when exhausted. This was no doubt the conclusion Emperor Alexios I reached when deciding to change the general strategy in the region.

The transformation of the region between the Lower Danube and the Stara Planina Mountains into a buffer zone coincided in time with the increasing military importance of the region on the border with Hungary. Resources began to concentrate in that region under John II and especially Manuel I, as Hungary was increasingly perceived as capable to block access to the road leading to Thessaloniki and Constantinople along the Morava valley. This is the ultimate reason for the growth of both Belgrade and Braničevo during the reign of Manuel, when both forts were completely rebuilt. The Serbs were an additional threat, as they often rebelled with Hungarian assistance. The strategy implemented by the Comnenian emperors, therefore, was meant to increase the security in the central parts of the Balkans, at the expense of the Lower Danube. In the end, Manuel was successful against Hungary by means of both war and a dynastic alliance. But the ultimate (albeit unintended) consequence of the marriage between his daughter and the future Hungarian king was that Béla III got involved in the conflict caused by the usurpation of Andronikos, which

[11] Borisov 2007, 74–78.

reopened the Hungarian-Byzantine dispute over the region of Belgrade and Niš region, a dispute Hungary later took with Bulgaria as well.

The collapse of the Byzantine military organization on the Danube was the direct consequence of the Vlach-Bulgarian rebellion of 1185. The rebels were assisted by Cumans, who brought in valuable military experience and power. A century after the secession of Paradunavon, primarily because of economic reasons, the region along the Danube was finally completely lost by the Byzantines, who were no more capable to match the military power of the rebels and prevent them from taking over key strategic points in the mountains (passes and forts), which had until then secured the defense of the European parts of the Empire.

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